

The Reign of God

"NOT

THE REIGN OF LAW"

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THE REIGN OF GOD

NOT

“THE REIGN OF LAW.”

*A NEW WAY (AND YET VERY OLD) TO DECIDE THE
DEBATE BETWEEN “SCIENCE” AND
RELIGIOUS FAITH.*

BY

THOMAS SCOTT BACON.
”

“*Σου εστιν ἡ Βασιλεια.*”

“THINE IS THE KINGDOM.”

BALTIMORE:
TURNBULL BROTHERS.

1878.

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TO THE
HONORABLE
MEMBERS OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AND
THE SENATE

PREFACE.

THE author having had this work in hand for three years, and having given to it all the time that could be spared from other and important employments, has found certain convictions growing stronger with him all that time. The *first* is, that what is here presented is the true answer to the question pending between Christian Faith and Modern Science. The *second* is, that no modern* writer brings forward this truth and applies it to the facts. The *third* is, that religious doubt is wider spread and more threatening with every day. The *last* is, that the matter as here treated so as to anticipate and remove all such misconceptions as would obscure the truth, is so vast as to draw into a mighty vortex all the other great problems of thought. He must therefore quite relinquish the hope of any such complete discussion now — must but imperfectly notice several of these topics, and rather remit them

* And yet, as will be seen, it has appeared under some of the greatest names of old, but not in this application.

to such further discussion as may arise upon criticism of the present writing.

Yet, no such matter has been knowingly passed over, nor anything which has been or could be used in argument against the writer's conclusions been left without what has seemed to him a sufficient answer. He has carefully avoided "technical" words of philosophy or theology. His hope has been to use such plain and simple English, that all sensible persons could follow his meaning, and at the same time not to evade the deepest matters of truth which belong to the question. That question is so deep as to require much thought; but it is none the less *practical* and *urgent* for every man, woman and child in Christendom. The writer is confident that even if he can be proved in error, he will by that very process give his critics the opportunity of making the truth more clear and useful than it is now. In any case, as his labor has been one of simple love to Him who is "the Light of the world," his only wish is that it may fare as shall please and glorify HIM.

T. S. B.

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THE REIGN OF GOD

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“The Reign of Law.”

CHAPTER I.

SOME SERIOUS FACTS AND QUESTIONS.

ALL people in the Christendom of this age who read newspapers and new books, are thinking and arguing about one of the greatest of possible questions, viz. whether men can now rationally believe the Articles of the Christian faith, in what has at least until now seemed their plain sense. And since more people do now read and argue than ever before, and this number continually increases, and even now virtually includes all the people, the controversy never before was of such practical importance.

There is yet another fact which increases the seriousness of the occasion. In any former like period, as for example the days of Hume or of Paine, the discussion was not only more than now a contest

between a few literary persons, but it was scarcely known to any but the men that there was any such contest. A little of this did indeed leak out from them among women and younger people; but the greater seclusion of these, the continuing traditions of a somewhat religious education for children, the character of all books in their hands, whether for learning or amusement (even a lingering "reverence for youth"), kept them in almost total ignorance of what was said against Christian belief. It is altogether different now. The new freedom of manners, especially among the great and busy English-speaking people, and yet more especially those of America, and the restless tendency of modern public education to remove religion from schools, combine with the wonderful multitudinousness of printing and reading in our days to remove all these barriers. Our school-boys and school-girls devour as indiscriminately as their elders the newspapers, magazines and entertaining books of the day; and these are all alive with that great question of faith or doubt.

Therefore, let none of us too easily quiet our wise anxiety about such questions with thinking that just such threatenings of danger to faith have occurred before, and have passed away without justifying the alarms of the devout. Nothing can be more strange beyond precedent and more portentous than an unbelieving intelligence of the young. The very gateway of faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ and eternal life through Him is in being as a little child.

So, if in fact a generation is before our eyes passing from the best time of faith into the peculiar dangers as well as the special strength of active life, in blindness to that truth which is nobler and more necessary than all else, what can we hope for their hard and worldly later years? And soon we shall all be gone, and they will be the teachers and examples of those to come after.

The facts are as stated, whatever our account of them or feeling about them. The writer has taken special notice of them, and he finds the same impression made upon other thoughtful observers. But lately, the custodian of the chief library in one of our great cities said that he was anxious that in this debate the side of faith should be better maintained against its opposers. "For," said he, "doubt is increasing, especially among younger people; I have occasion to see it here." He noticed what books were most called for and read with most eagerness and satisfaction. All our popular "periodicals" in the same way strongly reflect as well as powerfully affect general opinion. So, with the young, with those who pass for having the most "culture," and even with our plainer people, grows the notion that this age knows too much to be as religious as some men used to be.

As one of the thousand indications of this among the powerful people whose is the English language (for in these days nations are such rather by their common language and ideas than by governments—as the German-speaking and the English-speaking

nations), observe this fact. It is now eighteen years since the celebrated "Essays and Reviews" of certain Oxford scholars appeared. This book was less notable for any force of its own, than as a symptom of a forcible organized effort within the Church of England to promote opinions as Christian, which would once have found no advocates among Christians. It brought forth protests, replies and refutations quite sufficient to counteract its arguments; yet its spirit and credit are stronger this day than ever.

Certainly, if there be any recent change, "science" is more alien to Christian faith and more contemptuous towards it than ever before among the English race. Even the Christian writers of science seem more scientific than Christian; and the others move on with an assured air of triumph which is itself half a victory over general opinion.*

Why is this, when far the greater advantages for such a conflict are on the Christian side, namely, real truth and the favor of God? Some of these later advocates of faith are honest, acute, and eloquent; though it must be admitted, that for simple clearness of style and accuracy of language, and for that earnest and lively elegance in serious writing of which Plato is the great example, some of the promoters of unbelief in our age are the superiors. This is in no small degree the cause of their success. Yet, what a trifling matter that is when men are deciding what they will receive as true about the great God and their immortal destiny!

* H. Spencer; Fiske's *Cosmical Philosophy*, &c., *passim*.

We have reason, therefore, for saying that the right side of this question must have been wrongly handled. To say this as it were at the onset of the conflict—before the truth as so presented has had a reasonable time to have effect, would be unfair. But we need not and do not pass our judgment hastily. We should also allow much in the apparent result for something in the will of God beyond our judgment: His purpose that sometimes these things shall turn out as we cannot account for them. Yet, the matter being so great and so threatening, let us all pause and ask if it may not be our duty to find out *why* this is so; and what more, if anything, we ought to do.

Is there not something wrong in the usual, not to say universal method in which faith is now defended? The present writer thinks that there are several points in which that method needs severely plain criticism. He does not mean this for a sparkling diatribe, nor for a smart and captious "review." He wishes to observe a modest deference for honorable names; to keep in mind that it is of no advantage to truth, and but a low ambition, to arraign valuable writers, expressing dissatisfaction with all they say, and holding them to a strict account for it if they have not altogether "put to flight the armies of the aliens."

Such a mean, unjust and barren purpose is not his, as will appear more fully as he proceeds. He would both search for and tell plainly what mistakes have been made in this sacred work; and he would also

propose something positive which he thus offers to the same severe criticism. The truth of God concerning the supreme welfare of man is greater than any man's or all men's names or sensibilities. So surely will all Christian thinkers agree, if now, even from some obscure source, should come any suggestion that will help in the vindication and triumph of faith.

Of such mistakes he thinks he observes the following: 1st. While the argument is *about* religion, it is *not religious*. For instance, the name of God is perhaps used frequently; but nothing indicates the thought of who He really is.* Now, reverence is not merely the absence of irreverence. Love divine is not a cold word to be tossed out like a counter in the game of debate. Language used upon these themes cannot be "scientific" in the sense of excluding that *sentiment*, without being false. Whatever may be true in other investigation about "dry light" or "white light," obtained by banishing all feeling, does not apply to this. Light and warmth, truth and love, are not separable here. You may separate the elements of vital air, then experiment upon and explain either one of them, and finally recombine them as air. But if you attempt the same process with the man who lives by breathing that air, and get soul and body apart so that you may investigate the latter, you no longer have the man at all, but some inert matter, and you never can make that again part of the living man. Thus, if the love of

* That is a profound principle of the Third Commandment, of its not specifying blasphemy, but the "taking His name in vain"—uttering that sacred word without a true thought of its meaning and of His person.

God is excluded from thought, we shall find no light of truth upon these transcendent things. All our reasoning is mere illusion; and while the words occupy us, the heavenly "things they signify" are to us unreal.

This intellectual folly of the Christian "men of this generation," would indeed produce more immediate fatal effects, but by the mercy of God there is an actual inconsistency between it and their real life. They think and write and read about God as if in the use of reason they must keep out of sight of His *love* (which is in tendency and in inevitable ultimate result as if there were "no God"); yet, they are in fact still under the light and warmth-giving rays of knowledge of that love as it shines in the Church and in the divine Word. And yet, if there is anything which is, as distinguished from "accident," of the *essence* of the conception of Him on the one hand, and of our life on the other, it is the *love* of God.

"Then the mind of him who has no belief in this Divine love is inaccessible to us in arguing for faith in God?" That is not so certain;* and if it were true, it would be much the less of the evils to choose between. "But this will not allow us to be logical with the reasoner who questions this faith, and ought to be answered and convinced." Then let us be true, even if we must cease being logical. We have here only one of the instances of the incapacity of

* For while we have no right ever to omit this *fact* from our argument, even the unloving heart feels unconsciously some of its force, and its presence takes none of their force from other reasons addressed to the mere intellect.

was once to just such men "foolishness"; but none the less did St. Paul hold it up to all men alike as "the wisdom of God and the power of God."

(3) It is a great defect of these writers, that not only in this, but in other respects, their *language* is very different from that of Holy Scripture. This in part includes the faults before mentioned, and also that which is to follow. It is also in part their effect. The incongruity, however caused, and whether observed or not, sends a chill of doubt over the reader. The faith and truth of God's Word are felt (if not seen) to be in a false position. And so the arguments for them, however ingenious, are in the main sterile.

(4) But that which is most mischievous of all I have reserved for the last mention here, and it is the main subject of this enquiry. By the curious reciprocal relations and influences of what seem different things, and yet are only different aspects of the same thing — this is partly cause, partly sign, and partly effect of the others, and they of it. It is the assumption in all books of science and general literature of our day, and especially in all writings either for or against Christian faith, of something called "the reign of law." This is the hinge of the whole present controversy. It is the very chosen ground upon which the forces of unbelief form their line of battle, and upon which the soldiers of faith have descended to construct their defensive positions and make what resistance they can to the onset.

It is the purpose of the following discussion to

show that this is a fatal error: that the "reign of law" is a mere gratuitous assumption, unproved and impossible of proof, indeed, contrary to our best reason, and to absolute and certain truth as God has uttered it directly to men. It is one of the signs of how far we have all drifted from older and wiser ways of thinking, that one of the latest and most generally accepted defences of Christian faith against doubt, bears this very title, "The Reign of Law." As the danger of such false notions often lies in their concealment under ambiguous terms, it is fortunate that a well-meaning opposer of unbelief, whose position makes his example a very conspicuous one, has thus exposed so plainly the real character of the popular error, and given us the occasion to contrast it with the Divine truth in *this* title: "THE REIGN OF GOD *not* 'THE REIGN OF LAW.'"

Upon fair and patient study of the whole matter, we shall find that this imagined truth, which is assumed to be the highest achievement of man's thought as well as the guide and bond of all further acquirement, is a delusion—a murky cloud of falsehood, hiding from mankind in proportion as it prevails, all the bright heavens and the vision of the Divine; blinding faith, checking prayer and chilling love. Then until this is removed, we need go no further to find why our arguments do not stop the advance of unbelief. Yet the notion is so strongly intrenched in all the language of our age, allowed on all hands, and perhaps until now disputed by no one within our knowledge, that we must agree to sit in trial upon it patiently as well as courageously.

It is indeed most true that God in His love towards mankind does all things around us in a *usual order*, and gives us an instinct of confidence in this; so that we may exercise forethought about our present life, and lay up from generation to generation, increasing stores of knowledge about the material creation. That is one thing; but it is very far from the same as that notion of a "reign of law" which I condemn. The former no way confines the absolute will of God, or our apprehension of it in faith, prayer or grateful love. The latter of necessity does. If I had a poor neighbor who needed every night to pass a dark and dangerous place near me, and I, knowing this, always placed my house-lights so that they would show him past the danger, and also informed him of this arrangement, that would be no sort of obligation of *law* to *me*, but none the less useful to him. It would not abridge my freedom in my own affairs, nor my right to change this custom for other purposes or in any emergency; nor my liberty, at my neighbor's request, to remove the light for special occasions, when that would be more for his advantage. It would not check his coming to make this request of me, especially if I had invited him to knock at my door at any time upon such errands and promised him a favorable hearing. (There can be no question that this would more promote affectionate feeling between the two parties than if the light on the poor man's way was provided by law.)

The theory of a reign of law is entirely different

This orderly movement is no longer the immediate will of One who is love, but the revolution of a vast and complicated machine, which must not be interfered with. It suggests doubt of anything which is proposed to our religious faith as having occurred, or yet to be, but which is contrary to this invariable order. The Holy Scriptures speak to us of prayer and miracles without proposing or acknowledging any such element of doubt.

It is with them as when a young child, who admires his father for all that is noble in a man, and regards him with happy love, asks him for something. The only question in his mind of obtaining his request is, whether his father has it to give; or, if that be so, whether he will think it really good for him. There is no notion of some other restraint upon the giver's good will, which checks the impulse of asking, or the hope of obtaining when he does ask.

So, and far more so, it would seem that a devout Christian would always pray to a Father in heaven for what he wanted, with simple readiness and confidence. So in the Holy Scriptures good men are always represented as doing. So, in fact now some religious people do, especially if their reading is only religious. But it has somehow come to pass that for other persons than these, there seems interposed between the suppliants on earth and the ever blessed God in heaven, something beside His gracious will and power. (This is not as when a sublime poetical prophet has said,* "Your iniquities

* Isaiah lix. 2.

have separated between you and your God." That hiding of His face from us is, we know as Christians, removed by pardon, when we pray with repentance and faith in our Lord.) It is conceived of as something outside of our spiritual condition, and outside of the immediate will of God for the occasion. It seems to require of Him in granting our requests, something more than simple will to do what we ask: that He must first set aside what would otherwise occur—must "interpose" in movements otherwise taking place without His special notice.

Now, whether or not we suppose this notion a new truth gained by our intelligence, when it comes into the simple religion existing before and held forth in the Holy Scriptures, its effect is of necessity very great. It is as would be the addition to our atmosphere of any new element, however attenuated or imperceptible to ordinary sense, in interrupting the solar heat and light upon which all terrestrial life depends. This new element of the soul's atmosphere in our day is the notion of "laws of Nature" or a "reign of law." It is such an interposing medium, not only as to prayer, but as to all faith in things spiritual; as to quiet confidence in God's care and mercy, notwithstanding what would otherwise make us anxious and afraid; as to gratitude when we escape dangers or receive blessings; as to faith in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into this world to save mankind, as "approved by signs and wonders"; as to all such marvellous things related in our Holy Book, and so witnessing that it is God's

Word; and as to any knowledge of God and all the heavenly things, with glory and joy in them by hope.

Let us consider well that this effect is produced not merely upon the readers of scientific books. It flows out into the "light reading" of the many, and into the atmosphere of general opinion; and it reaches almost every man, woman and child. It thus not only helps to deaden the spiritual sensibility of all, but also creates a general impression that when battle is joined between the admired leaders of "modern thought" and those who present themselves as champions of Christ's religion, these latter do not get the best of it. And what if their failure is not in being "unscientific," but in trying to *be* scientific?

Any way, this mischief is immeasurable. What advantage gained can be imagined to compensate this? It keeps men unhappy in spite of the very grace of God. It tends to reduce the Christian lands to worse than heathenism—to an irreligion in which the divine and spiritual has *no* acknowledgment; which would be a frightful degradation, spite of all the books, and arts and sciences left. Literally it casts off fear of the good God, and restrains prayer to Him. It defrauds our Lord the King of Glory of His salvation of mankind.

Fellow-Christians, would it not be good if we could dismiss from all belief an opinion so baleful in result? Even if you are so constituted or so environed by other influences that you are not affected by it in that fatal way, would you not be glad for

the sake of these others, if it could be given up without sacrifice of truth? Well, it *was* once unknown. Many generations of thoughtful men lived and died without it, and this includes all the Apostolic Christians. Let us then carefully examine its claims to belief.

[The just force of this argument will fail to reach my reader's mind if he conceives of it as a mere "question of words." For instance, if he assumes that a "reign of *law*" may be and really is in the effect of its use the same as the *reign of God*, which all Christians in terms maintain. I must therefore here by anticipation give warning against this mistake, and state briefly about this what I shall more fully show in its best place, later in this enquiry. 1st. God having chosen, or rather created this word *law* to tell man of his duty and obedience—if we appropriate it to some other use, we confuse our apprehension of that spiritual truth which is the knowledge most necessary for us and most divinely certain.

Beyond question it is more important for each of us to have a strong and true sense of *law* as what we are to do in obeying God, than as to what passes around us in the world of matter and force. Now the first (and as we shall yet see the only true) sense of that word implies *two wills*, one commanding and one obeying. Thus one who has that right to command says, "Thou shalt love (Me) the Lord thy God with all thy heart." This is the commanding will. I apprehend this and love Him. That is the

obeying will. Or I disobey, and so far as I do am guilty. Yet, without freedom for this guilty disobedience there is no real *law*. The same applies to human law, and therefore and because all such rightful law is really by His authority, He allows us this, and only this, secondary use of the word *law*. To employ it in the account of mere cause and effect in things which have no will or choice, is a figure of speech which, as long as it is understood to be merely such (as is such use of it in Holy Scripture), is good. But when it becomes "philosophy," and is treated as if it were the highest literal truth to which we must adjust our religious thought, it will only weaken the primary and necessary force of the term as to our obedience of God.

2d. This enquiry is not useless as being only a "question of words" in the sense that a "reign of law" is precisely "the reign of God." Man is dreadfully astray for all his real life and destiny, except as our Lord in His Gospel rescues him. This depravity consists in separation from God, and aversion to the true thought, and so from the love of Him. Instead of this glorious life of love in which his greatest joy is that God talks with him, when now he hears His voice he hides himself in the trees of the garden. Even after he is by Christ's salvation set in the right way, he is continually tempted from it to false thoughts of God as well as to false ways of willful disobedience. Once and everywhere on the earth this temptation was in the notion of "gods many." Now and in Christendom it is in *words* which pretend religion without its reality.

This flatters human vanity, by persuading us that we have come to think so profoundly and vigorously that we have got beyond the common idea of God as a person. Sometimes it is in fancying that we have discovered, not that God is all, but that All is God. As one aspect of the Divine is greatness, we gratify the pleasure of thought about this by contemplating the vastness of creation, and then persuade ourselves that this is adoring the Creator—that the total of what God has made is God; which is really one way of saying that there is no Creator and no God.

Or, short of this false dogma, we may give our *attention* only to this "Nature," and say that "the heavens declare *its* (or *her*) glory"; and by such personifying and deifying of "Nature," refuse to behold the only living and true Person. Or we may make a like false use of any abstraction or adjective, and talk only of "Mind," "Will," "the True," "the Right," "the Good," and so get rid of real religion. It is of precisely the same effect to attribute power and government to any abstract word, as to say that "Law" reigns, instead of that God reigns. If we mean the latter, why do we not say it and not the other, which promotes atheism in those who are inclined that way, and obscures the light of this glorious truth to the religious. No, it is not an idle question of words which is involved in this proposition, "The REIGN OF GOD not the reign of law." The other great spiritual consequences which help to prove the truth of what is here maintained, also enhance its importance, as will appear later in the discussion.]

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO "REIGNS" CONTRASTED.

WE are making this enquiry now as Christian believers. (How we might argue about it with others is another thing, and will receive brief notice in the final suggestions). As such, we know that God is absolute, eternal and almighty, and that of His will only He made all else that exists, to begin that existence. We can suppose of the Creator after this act of creation, one of these three things : either (1) that all continuance of being and all movement is the actual direct power of God, just as was the creation ; or (2) that with the creation He gave a self-existence to what He had made, and established a force or forces, as a man adjusts the spring of a watch, which would then of itself work all the life and movement we see, either forever, or for any time He limited. We may then declare that these movements are "laws of nature," as imperative as laws of moral conduct and religion given to men, and even more fixed, necessary and invariable. But to this we may add that God has reserved to Himself the power to suspend or act contrary to these laws at rare intervals, by miracles, for His own special purposes ; or (3) we may say that we know only that all things were created by God and exist according to His will, but that He has told us no more, and it would be presumptuous folly for us to think that

we could by any "searching find out God" in so great a matter. This last of the three alternatives amounts practically to the first, and may appear in the course of this enquiry to involve it of necessity.

The real question then lies between the first and second. As the latter assumes the notion of the "reign of law," so we may distinguish the idea of the former as the *reign of God*. As has been already suggested, it would be a great mistake to suppose that this involves a denial of that usual order of events upon which all our calculation and science are based. When God has planted in my soul the instinctive faith, and confirmed it with His own gracious promise, that these things shall follow one another in the order I observe in them now, (except upon some extraordinary occasions which the same gracious love will find for doing us more good in another way), have I any reason for distrusting this because *He does* each of these things *in person*, instead of by a huge machine set in motion 6000 or 60,000 years ago, or because I do not (and cannot) suppose that He ever manacled His most blessed and glorious omnipotent will by some "laws" to that effect? Is not divine love and truth security enough for man's calculations? If not, what "laws" or forces could ever give me rational confidence?

This idea of "the reign of God" has no difficulties for faith, either as regards prayer or miracle. That God usually sustains all things and does me good in a regular succession of acts which I can calculate upon, does not hinder His doing any other thing

which I pray for, or any "great wonder" to give witness to His word. Nor does it impair my power to believe in these things, or to expect them according to His promise. His giving what I ask *may* fall within this regular working (whether within the view of my calculating forethought or beyond it), or it may not. The one is as easy for Him as the other, and as possible for me rationally to believe. The only thing for me in either case, is to be pleased and grateful whatever answer He makes to my prayer. And so if He presents a miracle to my faith, I can at once recognize it by its spiritual as well as its sensible signs, and simply believe.

It is entirely different with the notion of a "reign of law." To grant my prayer or perform a miracle, requires then, at least in my thought, that a vast, immensely complicated mechanism shall be deranged, or that even this mechanism shall be immensely more complicated (which is the favorite device of our modern writers to "reconcile" prayer and miracle with mechanical "law" in all things). In this last case it is still the machine working, and not God graciously willing. The true spiritual idea of prayer, or of the immediate power of God in a miracle, is thus made very difficult, if not impossible to be conceived.*

It is true that those who speak of "laws of nature" do not agree in what they mean by the term; and some of them say that they do *not* mean this mechan-

*I shall consider later and at length, the reply which may be made to this, that as all events and actions are really always present to the Absolute One, it is as easy for Him to arrange His "laws of nature" for all the apparent interferences, as without them.

ism. But we must deal with the actual notion it conveys to most people, with its meaning as the popular authors write* and people read, and with the *necessary tendency of thought* in the words used. There is such a tendency in this use of "law" which no explanation can stay and no warning neutralize. It is a most remarkable instance of how some "words are things." It makes us think of God as limited in His power and love.

Upon what proof then is this "reign of law" believed? None whatever. It is a mere assumption. One may look in vain in the writers who reason upon it, either for or against religious faith, for any such proof.† They say "it is plain," or "it is admitted," &c. They seem to suppose that no thoughtful person could ever think otherwise. Whereas, some of the wisest men that ever lived have held to the "reign of God" in incessant immediate power, as I now maintain it. One writer says that this true and glorious idea would "deny the immutability of God," and give up the universe to chaotic chance.‡ Others say that it is treating divine will as "capricious," and without intelligence. All this is mere begging of the question. It really proceeds from a wrong notion, that we can argue and decide about what God must do, from human nature.

* For example, "The Reign of Law."

† What comes nearest to such argument will be examined later. The "Reign of Law," pp. 63-64, appears to set out upon the proof, but soon abandons it. The eloquent rhapsodies of Hooker and Montesquieu are not reasonings, yet they are fairly examined in Chapter IX.

‡ This astonishing position is taken by one of the writers in the Christ. Ev. Society's series. What is the writer's idea of "immutability"? As immovability, or mere mechanism?

It is strange that Christians will commit this folly, when not only does our best reason expose it, but His own voice speaking from heaven says, "My ways are not your ways." Even unbelievers sometimes see this and object to the "anthropomorphism" of Christians.* From this proceed also two other notions, which may be now in the minds of my readers, obstructing their correct judgment in the argument which is to follow, viz. that at the creation, God must have set up this mechanical "reign of law," first, because it would be an economy of force; and secondly, because a foreseeing "mind" would naturally provide for its plans in that way. We forget that this, which is true enough of our poor little forethought, will and power, has no sort of application to one with whom all is independence and eternity. For since He, and He alone, is literally *infinite*, without bounds in any direction, His power is not merely inexhaustible, but is *not lessened* by any action or all actions. So his knowledge, attention, and love (let us not forget that) are no more tasked (and need no more spare themselves) by the instant creation of all things in each successive moment of time, than they were six thousand years ago, nor than if they were allowed sixty thousand years for the process. Language indeed fails before this ineffable contemplation. So also let our reasoning keep silence when it sets out to say what God must have done.

Therefore, so far as we have proceeded, it is plain that we may take up this enquiry unprejudiced by

* See Lewes' Aristotle, p. 86. Fiske's Cosmical Philos. pp. 393, 422. Oh that they were as wise otherwise!

any presumption in favor of a "reign of law." We will do well also to understand that what I maintain now is far from being a new notion, set against the belief of all the past. There have been many just such protests in substance, against the ideas of "laws of nature" and their "reign," made by wise and devout men in past ages. I only place here some sentences from the noble sermon of Henry Melville upon "the continual agency of the Father and the Son."*

"But is not our philosophy as defective as our theology, so long as we thus give energy to matter and make a deity of nature? * * * * I do not believe it the result of properties which, once imparted, operate of themselves, that vegetation goes forward and verdure mantles the earth. I rather believe that Deity is busy with every seed that is cast into the ground, and that it is through its *immediate agency* that every leaf opens and every flower blooms. I count it not the consequence of a physical organization—the effect of a curious mechanism which, once set in motion, continues to work—that pulse succeeds to pulse and breath follows breath: I rather regard it as literally true that in God 'we live and move and have our being,' that each pulse is but the throb, each breath the inspiration of the ever present, all actuating Divinity. Away with the idolatry of nature! Nature is but a verbal fiction invented to keep out of sight the unwearied acting of the Great First Cause."

* Melville's Sermons, vol. I, p. 287: Philadelphia.

CHAPTER III.

IS THIS A SCIENTIFIC OR A RELIGIOUS QUESTION?

MY fellow-Christians, some who disclaim that title say that we Christians do not love truth, but in all these discussions only follow our prejudices. And some who share the honor of that name with us, insist that we cannot be honest and candid seekers of God's truth unless we concede certain postulates of those others. These postulates are that there are "laws of nature"; and that we must adjust our faith in the Holy Scriptures, in the miracles related by them, and in the duties and results of prayer to God, to this "reign of law," (*i. e.* in effect the reign of such "laws" as our present science claims to have proved) or give up that faith. We will therefore first seek the truth about this claim, and find out whether there are any such laws which have any sort of relation to our faith.

It is generally agreed among Christian believers, whether scientific or not, that some truth is religious and some natural; and that religion does not teach the latter, nor science the former. Accepting this as substantially true,* in which of these divisions of knowledge shall we look for the truth about the

*If any object to the term "natural" thus used, they are welcome to substitute any other which will define what so many are ready enough to insist that religion has no business with.

supposed "reign of law"? — in other words, is it a scientific or a religious question? Is it something about God? Is it something about what He willed and did before there was a man to observe any of His works? Undoubtedly it is. Then just so undoubtedly it is a question of religious knowledge.

But on the other hand, suppose it be suggested that as this question relates to what we know by our senses, and what comes under our observation and reasonings, it therefore belongs *also* (for this is the utmost that could be claimed) to our science. Even this is disproved by reflection. For science, as its greatest proficient insist, knows nothing of history :* that is, of a free will, if there be such a thing, and its actions; of what any person (and surely least of all, what the Great One) has done in the measureless past. It knows only *phenomena*, things actually occurring in a usual order since men began to observe them.

God's creation of all things from nothing, or His making any fixed regulation for existence since, or imposing laws upon Himself for its mode of continuance, or for what He should will to do in it or with it, whatever of this may be thought true, is alike outside of the scientific knowledge.

To tell about a "Book of Nature" delivered to men by God, as much as His book of Holy Scripture, and in which, as well as in that Scripture, He informs them of Himself, is of no force in this argument. So

* Its modern votaries are in fact attempting history in their geology, astronomy and studies of animal and vegetable life; but this is their "unscientific" folly.

far as this language is not the imagination of some good men to express in a lively way their gratitude for the pleasure such studies give them, and as illustrating how a soul (if already devout) will behold His power, glory and love in all His wonderful works of ordinary nature — the notion of a “Book of Nature” teaching us all about God as His real Word does, is dangerous nonsense. In many lamentable instances, the most scientific of men have studied the “Book of Nature” only to disobey the blessed Gospel of our Lord, and even become atheists.

By what reasoning from present science can men *know* how God made, and continues this incalculable multitude of existences and processes which we call “nature”? Allow human investigation the largest possible present achievement, and it does not yet know the thousandth part of the facts for such a conclusion. And if it had all the *facts*, it is most probable that human intelligence is incapable of the necessary generalization. Let me calmly reflect upon what a single “day brings forth”: upon the amount and variety of movement on this earth alone between one sunrise and another; the vast total of visible life, from mosses to men; the amazing multitude of creatures invisible to our ordinary sight; the flowing of water-currents and tossings of oceans; the atmospheric movements — vapors, storms and currents; the solar and planetary influences upon our globe; and all this penetrated and affected by the free wills of a thousand millions of men. Consider how all these act upon one another in countless and incessant

variations. Multiply this by the days of a year then by all the ages since creation. Add to this what we may conjecture of the immense space in which our earth is so little, and of the multitude of "worlds" which move in it. Augment the calculation by such a glance over the eternal future as the Eternal One must have ever before Him.

No less a collection of facts than all this must human science have before it, to establish as one of its true conclusions, that God in the creation set up a "reign of law." Even then it is not wise to believe that one of us creatures, were he the "wisest and brightest," or all of us together, could comprehend these particulars in one consistent view, and demonstrate "the knowledge of God's ways," as by "laws of nature" instead of His incessant and immediate will. Indeed, so far as I know, no such demonstration has been attempted.

It is always *assumed* as something already proved, or self-evident; and as so admitted by all men as a matter of course. It is not, that I am aware of, *stated as self-evident*. For that, it must needs be one of those propositions which, when put in words, every one agrees to at once: as that the whole of anything is greater than any part of it. On the contrary, this notion of the "reign of law" when presented to my mind (and many others) is evidently false. If it is said to be already proved to better informed men, whose discoveries I ought to accept, I can only do this reasonably upon such scrutiny of their proof as I now attempt. The argument already

pursued hardly leaves room to think that any such proof is possible, short of direct information from the Eternal Creator Himself.

Every just reflection then remits this question to the province of religion—to what God has chosen to tell mankind in words of Himself, as well as of their relations to Him. If it be true that He in creation set up certain natural forces to continue automatically until He removed them, or bound Himself by certain “laws” to carry on all this life and movement in an invariable way, then this is a truth of religion, and not of science. It is to be examined and proved as other religious truth is. Then, if so established, science may, within its domain, ascertain for us specially what those laws are; and we may decide upon the proof of these in detail, and as to how they relate to our religious faith.

This is a very weighty conclusion and draws great consequences with it. Let us study it from every point of view to make sure of the truth, and to give that truth all the clearness and force possible. The first thing is to decline *assuming* such “laws of nature” and their “reign,” because all the great writers of our time do. It is *proof* which we want and must have. Have mankind “by searching found out God” in this respect? If some one asserts that He has so made man and the *cosmos* around him, that he may (and with the purpose that he should) discover such “laws,” let them prove *that*. Is it so proved from God’s own Word?

I am not aware that any one affirms that. On the contrary, we shall see in Chapters VI. and VII. that not a trace of it is found in Holy Scripture, but the opposite in the precise words of many passages, and in thousands of others by most plain implication.

Or is it claimed upon the theory so often rashly insisted upon in the details of science, that a theory to which all facts so far discovered agree, is itself a demonstrated fact? Surely no one who will ponder the vastness of such an inference in this case, compared with the immeasurable littleness in proportion of our accumulated facts, (or what we think so now,) can at once be sure of that. Indeed, all these facts really agree at least as well with the idea of the *immediate* will and power of God. Especially considering the rash vanity of the human mind, which is such an infirmity in confusing its perceptions even of far inferior truth, shall we not take time to see whether this notion of "law in nature," etc., may not be rather some of that *false* "wisdom by which the world knew not God," than something which He is teaching us in His works?

Again: there is a question of what God did "in the beginning,"—of *how* He did it. From whom can we have knowledge about this? Surely from none but Himself. There was no human witness. If there could have been, he could not have comprehended what he saw. God has indeed given to man some verbal account of this creation; but He has *not* added to this the suggestion that His creature

could only understand this thirty centuries afterward by scientific studies of the existing order of nature, and even add to it the greater fact which He did not directly reveal, of a "reign of law." He has said no such thing in all his later written Word, even by sayings upon earth of Him who is in person the Word of God, and when it was perfected in the New Testament. But this He *has* said: "*Canst thou by searching find out God? . . . Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? . . . Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding? . . . Knowest thou it because thou wast then born, or because the number of thy days is great?*" (Job xi. 7; xxxviii. 2, 4, 21.) And if we *have* ventured to make positive assertions about such things from what we have observed or conjectured, our best reason responds in the penitent confession of that man of great thought, the patriarch Job: "Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? Therefore *have* I uttered that I understood not: things too wonderful for me which I knew not." (xlii. 3.) It is but sober reason for us to conclude that we can no more discover the method of the innumerable and immeasurable works of God, by tracing backwards out of its millions of processes some few which we seem to understand, than we could have comprehended and stated it at the beginning, if eye-witnesses then.

Or suppose the thoughtful Christian to try the question by the following method. We may proceed

in either of these two directions, viz. 1st. What is knowledge in religion? and is this a question of that knowledge? Or, 2d. What is science? and is this a question of that kind? Either one of these investigations should be a true test; and each must surely give the same result, for all truth is consistent with itself. We try them both in turn.

1. Religious truth certainly, at the least, includes all we know or can know about God. Therefore the proposition that God at creation set up an invariable system of law for all matter and life, which continues unbroken, unless in some very rare exceptions; or that He infused into this material creation a force or forces which were to remain in it and constitute its existence and motion afterwards—or that He *bound Himself* by such "laws of nature"—this in either of its forms is a statement about God, of what He did or does. Therefore, if true, it is a truth of religion. Is there any escape from this conclusion? I see none.

Or, 2dly, What is science as distinguished from religion? That is, what is its province? its field of investigation? its possible achievement? Certainly the facts of the "cosmos" around us—intellectual as well as material, if you please—but only that: the succession and (apparently and ordinarily) invariable connection of its events, whether you call them causes and effects, forces and motions, or life, or even "laws of nature." But whether there was something else before this present order of "nature" began, or how or when it began, (that is, creation)

is entirely beyond the range of science. It knows nothing before that order—nothing beyond it.*

The same man may indeed see God and His will by religion, and also learn about "nature" by science. He may connect the two in his thoughts, and illuminate the science by the religion. But none the less all this knowledge of God, including that of creation and of Divine power in existence and life, came to him in the way of religion and not of science.

Follow any scientific investigation to the farthest conclusions and widest generalization, and what do we come to at last? A true vision of God at creation, arranging a mechanism or limiting His own will for the future? Do we then hear a divine voice telling this, or find an inscription recording it? No, we have our chain of successive facts, and nothing more.

If indeed there were no revelation from God about creation, we might venture beyond real scientific research into some conjectures from it as to the beginning. But what presumption it would be to compare them in importance or certainty to such a revelation, or to adjust its meaning to them!

Suppose that we here venture upon some such speculation, taking the fact (as now believed by us

*It really knows nothing of that order as existing before its observations begin, certainly not before the histories and traditions of men. It may learn of this preceding period from a *Word of God*, or may conjecture it in details, by reasoning that the first known facts being the results of processes now in action, it can trace them backwards for vast periods of our time, and really indefinitely. But this is at the utmost conjecture. It will be fully discussed later in observations upon the relation of such theories to the Word of God. See Chaps. V. and X.

all) of universal gravitation of matter. Let us pursue its instances everywhere in one direction to the parts of microscopic insects—the motes floating in our air, and the most attenuated element of that air; in the other, to all the vast uncounted spheres that move in the yet immeasurably vaster space into which our great telescopes pierce. Suppose that we compare this with heat, electricity, chemical affinity and all other imagined forces; that with the most grand conjecture we reduce them all to one by correlation, and presume the conservation of this in a total that never varies, however much it appears in changing proportions of these forms. What then?

We have now really gone somewhat beyond fact and knowledge into the region of imagination. But suppose this brilliant guess to be yet turned into as much demonstration as is now allowed by all to the "law of gravitation." What then? We have ascertained *one force* which represents all motion: that is, we have one *word* for it, and that is all. For what is this force? Is it a living thing which moves of itself? Then it is a person and a will. And with all this omnipresence and omnipotence it is a *god*; or rather, we who know the true religion, must say *the One and Only God*. And as we know Him to be the Spirit who is love and truth, we see that the one force is Himself, working incessantly and immediately by His mere *will*. (This is indeed not an argument for those who say that they do not know the being of that Person, unless and except so far as it is

proved from "nature." Unfortunately, it is the fashion of all philosophic writing now to allow this primary atheism. Whereas, the true reason of man is to recognize the personal being of the Eternal One as the first and necessary *fact* in our knowledge.)

Let us agree then, that if and when science gets to the fact of *the one force*, its own force is exhausted, and it has only again come in sight of the essential truth with which all knowledge begins. Then, if it will be rational, it cannot expect religion to learn anything from it, but can only be the humble pupil and servant of religion. It can no more answer the religious question now before us, in asserting that the force of nature is some mechanism created and set in motion before any history or observation of man—that is, previous to the very fixed order which it explores—than it can reveal what existed a thousand centuries before that.

CHAPTER IV.

SHOULD IT BE TRIED BY "NATURAL THEOLOGY"?

WHAT then is the true method of investigating this religious question? Our later Christian writers (all of them, I think) assume that the first process of religious inquiry is by what they call "natural theology." This assumption is as irresponsible as it is universal. It is not noticed in the ancient creeds of the Church; not, that I am aware of, recognized in any confessions of faith, articles of religion, or other symbols of the main divisions of our later Christendom. It stands merely by the authority of certain great names among the writers of the last three centuries,* and is properly subject to the same free examination as all other matters of opinion. If true, it will be the stronger and more useful for the scrutiny; if false, it is not a harmless or unimportant error in regard to our present inquiry.

Let one of these later writers† represent them all in substance. In arguing against "modern doubt," he labors with some obscurity and not a few self-contradictions, to show that there is something called "philosophy" or "natural theology," from which every human soul first gets religious knowledge.

*This is the simple fact as to our English people. Of course I am aware that the phrase and something meant by it may be found in Christian literature for ages before that, and was a part of the technical theology of the "schoolmen."

†"Modern Doubt and Christian Belief," by Dr. Theodore Christlieb, p. 128 and *passim*.

Then he says that "revelation merely steps in to its aid, setting up, as it were, landmarks for necessary guidance in the region of moral and religious thoughts, etc."

According to this then, we ought now first to apply to "natural theology," to find whether the "reign of law" is a true "religious thought." After that, "revelation may merely step in to its aid," to make its truth or falsity the plainer. But there lies before us an earlier question yet, and that is, as to the truth of this whole idea of natural theology.

That idea is, that each soul of us begins to know God by reasoning from what we perceive of our own thoughts and of "nature" around us. Every man, woman or child is supposed at some time to reason thus: "There is a cause of everything; there is *one* cause of all—this is a person whom we know of by the name of God, and judge His general character to be according to the Christian idea." So it follows that only after this "natural theology" is received into our minds, can we learn something more of Him by His direct "revelation" to us, and what we are to Him and are to do toward Him. The general opinion of these Christian writers seems to be that but for man's fall from original innocence, this "natural theology" would have been religious knowledge enough for him without any "Word of God." So, to strengthen or restore Christian faith in any soul, (why not to teach it to one who had never heard of it before?); to prove any truth of religion, the process must always be in this order, first "natural theology," then "revelation."

But is it a fact that you or I, or any one else, so far as we know, begins first to think of God after such reasonings as those? Can we remember when we had no idea of Him, and got it afterwards by that process? Certainly not. Memory running back furthest into childhood can find no such atheistic blank. Little children may be very religious.* It matters not for this purpose whether we suppose the idea of God to be "innate" with the child, or to be always communicated to him by his elders before he can remember. There it is, before thought about "conscience" or anything else metaphysical. In the latter alternative it has passed down from one generation to another, from the very first, and found each successive soul ready to receive it without question or reluctance, as if made for such belief. *This* at least is "innate" (inborn)—the adjustment of man's mind to the knowledge of God. The latter is as evidently suited and needful to the former as light to the eye.†

If we had no actual information about this, we might indeed make the fanciful conjecture that the first man came to know God by abstruse reasoning.

* In eager controversies over this sentence in other aspects, we do not observe how the Word of God said this in person, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."—St. Matt. xviii.

† To those who have read that curious and in many ways interesting book, "The Grammar of Assent," it would be well worth while to examine how and why the writer substitutes for terms of immemorial usage and all just authority, such as *belief, faith and knowledge of truth or of God*, that of "assent." Without following his ingenious discussions, how much better is the simple truth, that as God made man specially to know and love Him, so He made that capacity more immediate and certain than any other, even than the consciousness of our own thoughts. It is not He who said, "know thyself"; but it is He who says that He "hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true."

But we have the actual history, and that tells us how the great Creator at once made Himself known in person to that creature whom he had "made in His own image." Let any thoughtful Christian read over this history in the first and second chapters of Genesis, and then try to adjust it to the theory of "natural religion," and he will find that theory casting over the whole account the same air of mythical unreality as the like treatment does to other parts of Holy Scripture.

On the other hand, while we might never have discovered this great fact by our own studies, it commends itself to our reason as soon as known and reflected upon. The Glorious One having among other creatures on this earth made one sort of living beings who were to be distinguished among them all as most like the divine, made it the main purpose of their life to know and love Him. He might have made the beginning of this great knowledge and divine affection to come only after a long and slow process of thought and many rolling years of life. But how plain it is that the simplest, natural and noble way would be to tell this man at the first: "I am God: know me with all thy mind: love me with all thy heart." Why was this harder for Him to do then, or for us to believe now, than the other opinion? In no way, if we really believe in the Almighty God. But this rational faith does become difficult if our minds are obscured by the notion that He is under some "reign of law."

But the question remains, whether mankind having

the first and purest knowledge of God by his direct Word and not by any "natural theology," they need resort to the latter for further religious information? It will be observed first, that to maintain this is to reverse the account of natural theology as given by its adherents. That supposes it to come first, when "revelation merely steps in to its aid," &c. And here I would guard against a possible misapprehension arising from the popular use of terms, by which "Word of God" means always and only the book of Holy Scripture. Whereas it properly includes all that God says in direct address to mankind by words, as distinguished from what He may be said to tell us by what His works and providence suggest to our thoughts. Its primary and literal meaning is speech, rather than writing. The latter is a later means of securing the former from loss or change, and providing that it may reach the increasing multitude of men. Doubtless the "Word of the Lord" often came to prophets in the first ages upon occasions when it was not afterwards written down, and thus every means by which any such revelation is preserved and repeated to men is, in a just sense, "the Word of God"; notably that society of men set up and continued in the world, expressly (among other purposes) to proclaim that truth.

Returning then to the question whether there be any such demonstrated truth or method of research as is commonly called "natural theology," by which we can try questions of religion, and specially the one before us, I admit that it has in its favor the

weight of some of the greatest names. Indeed, it has come about that no one as much as thinks of proving that it is true, useful and even indispensable in religious discussion, but takes all that for granted. Our examination of it so far is a powerful suggestion, if not demonstration, that this is a mistake. If so, it is a great mistake, misleading men in their search of the highest and most necessary truth.

Let us examine "natural theology" in another aspect, as it is brought forward by some of our day in a new and dangerous shape, under the term "Comparative Religion." This method is to select from all religions now maintained among mankind (or that ever have been) certain true principles in which they agree, and to discard all their points of difference as erroneous. Is this the way in which God has made men to know the truth about Himself and their duties? Quite opposed to it, and allowing of no reconciliation, is the idea that God has informed mankind of these things by "Word."

We all agree that the present generation of men, and many generations before them, are far from all having the true knowledge of God. Their very differences prove that some, even vast multitudes, must be very far from the true religion. How came this to be so? And what is the remedy? Those who contend for the method of "natural theology" — as well such of them as admit a "Word of God" to the first man, as the others — point to what is true in all the false religions, as a proof that men can attain to some religious truth by their own thoughts.

But to them (and to those who will not allow that there was ever a "revelation" in words, as a deeper conjecture than any of theirs, of how all men have come by their notions of religion) I propound this question: What became afterwards of that true knowledge which the first man had? We find religions everywhere, in all regions and races and ages of men. These religions are various and even contradictory; but they are religions. Whence, then, came the true religious idea of an unseen power above men, which must be worshipped? If we believe that men had at first some sort of information of this truth directly from God Himself, we cannot answer the question in the same way as if we suppose it to have come to them only by their own thoughts.

Can we think that the first knowledge utterly perished from later generations? In at least one family and small nation, it survived in some purity, was re-inforced by other Divine messages through prophets, and at last merged into greater and perfect good tidings from heaven. But had that first knowledge of God given to the first man, utterly ceased for the heathen tribes and great nations? Even for any man, woman or child of them all?

We cannot rationally think so. It is not fanciful, but most reasonable to suppose, that any great idea of truth like this, once getting abroad among men, will never perish from among them. It may be mingled by them with false notions, so as to disappear to ordinary notice in the compound. But it

will still remain in the thoughts of men, and work powerfully in all their history; it may enter into new combinations of influence a thousand times, but will never perish.

It is one of the noblest conjectures of modern science that no force is ever lost: that when it seems so, it has only passed into another form in other conditions. Is not this even more probable of a great thought once in the minds of men? Is it not of itself all but certain of a thought communicated to the first progenitors of mankind by God Himself and about Himself?—and so proceeding from that beginning of the race to every soul of them all in all their generations? Is there any place left for doubt, when that truth is involved in "the first and great commandment" of human life, its chief principle and object of being.*

Otherwise, what afterwards became of this thought? Did it after a while vanish into non-entity? Here were the first of mankind (even ten pairs instead of one, if any insist upon making an allegory in that point of the story of Eden): God having made them and all else, talks with them. Here is personal knowledge of Him, not only *that* He is, but in some measure *what* He is. When their children were born and grew up, this knowledge passed to them in the practice of worship, in conversation, and in the thousand incidents upon which religious thought will affect the business of ordinary life. This must be so even supposing there was

* *Raison d'être.*

nothing supernatural to reveal God anew. But certainly to these souls in which the thought of Him already lay, "the heavens," and others of His wonderful works, "declared the glory of God."

We will not now trace this knowledge down the generations which preserved the original religion in practice, but rather those which passed into idolatry. Had the first revelation then utterly vanished with these, so that they began all thought of religion anew, with reflections upon their "consciousness" and "causation"? Both reason and experience are against this notion. Who has ever had a great idea annihilated in his mind? What instance of it is there in history? By what process or progress could this greatest of conceptions cease to exist in any society of men?

A change to false religion after mankind lost original innocence is quite supposable and really probable. The son of one who, like one of us, though beset by evil desire, is still a pious worshipper, becomes worldly and vicious. He changes his religion somewhat to agree more with his evil heart. His descendants follow the same downward process. At last we have a nation of idolaters, with an elaborate system of false worship, and successive generations born and growing up with no idea of any other religion than this.

Yet all the while the original revelation of God survives in the very idea of any religion; of some being, power and person (or persons) above man; of this Divine law and will being contrary to man's

corrupt self-will. So that the traces of truth in all false religions, so far from being a proof of a "natural theology" which invents the conception of God from our own thoughts, and then by degrees rises from a non-religious conscience to the thought of Him as holy and gracious, are only another tribute to the Word of God as the first and only authority in all these questions.

But the theory of "Natural Religion" is sometimes argued from Holy Scripture itself, viz. from what St. Paul says in the Epistle to the Romans, 1st chap., 19th and 20th verses. All the chief matters of God's Word are mentioned or alluded to in *various* parts and passages. It is therefore astonishing to see what a structure of opinion has been raised upon only these two verses. (See Prof. Jowett's rules as quoted in Chap. VI.) Nowhere else in Holy Scripture do any careful writers profess to find this idea; for the well-known passage which occurs soon after,* is by them all and correctly applied only to the *moral* sense of *right* and *wrong* in conduct. Yet if only those two first-mentioned verses did plainly declare the doctrine of natural theology, it would prove that to be divine truth.

The precise words as given in our generally excellent English Bible are as follows: "Because that which may be known of God, is manifest in them; [or to them] for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the

* Rom. ii. 14, 15.—For when the Gentiles, &c., . . . are a law unto themselves. Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, &c.

world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are [or, that they may be] without excuse." In this there is no direct statement that any man ever did or ever can by his mere thinking discover for the first time the fact of God's existence and His character.

Let us examine whether the preceding and continuing argument of the writer, and a fair statement of the meaning of St. Paul in these verses in accordance with that, and in our more usual language, will really express the idea of "natural theology." Thus: St. Paul declaring that (and how) all men alike, Jews or heathen (Gentiles) need the salvation of God in Christ, goes on to say: "The just displeasure of the great God lies upon all mankind. The Gentiles are not innocent, though they have not had Moses and the prophets. For to all mankind alike, the religious idea, the thought of God, had not only come by tradition from Adam and Noah,* but had been continually renewed and corrected in their minds by the sight of His great works. Thus the eternal power and Divinity as something above us and to which we should be obedient, is enough known to each soul of man to make him a wilful sinner if he will sin. In *fact*, these Gentiles did not and do not obey and love God according to this knowledge. And as one of its results, this ungodliness darkened their very intelli-

* Only a little before St. Paul recognizes the divine story of Adam in Genesis; and that tells us how Adam knew God, and talked with Him, as also did Noah.

gence. So the more intelligent they claimed to be, the more really foolish they became in worldly self-conceit."

It will be observed that in all this there is no encouragement to the notion that men can by their mere thoughts, ascend to any true knowledge of God. It teaches the precise opposite. St. Paul shows by a past history that all men are morally guilty, and are by this in an actual process of farther removal from the truth with which the first men began. It is really wonderful that commentaries upon this passage do not take notice of this, and understand him to mean that God shows the knowledge of Himself to all men "by the things which are made," in the way of reminder and corroboration, and not of original revelation. Certainly the divine story of Adam and his first descendants which St. Paul believed (as we do) tells us of a greater knowledge of God among the first men than by mere thoughts about the seasons and stars. And he has in mind that first period, for he is speaking expressly of what men knew "from the creation of the world." We have before shown this, and also how that first knowledge could never entirely perish in the succeeding generations, especially as that idea of religion was refreshed by their beholding visible works of the true God.

Nor does St. Paul in this, or in the terrible account of the increasing degradation of mankind which follows, allow of an exception for certain philosophers of Greece. This is a very important matter in our

enquiry; for it will appear more and more in the course of this discussion that the opinions of these men, notably of Plato, have been made very much of by the Christian maintainers of "natural theology"—not to say allowed as of the highest authority in matters upon which this whole study turns. Let us remember that Socrates and Plato had lived and taught hundreds of years before St. Paul, and that he was then surrounded by their disciples and admirers. Now Plato's ingenious ideas never saved him from the sensual vices of his countrymen, nor worked any improvement in morals among the Greeks in the four hundred years that had followed. On the contrary, the world was probably more wicked in St. Paul's day than in Plato's. Observe rather, that if any men are singled out with emphasis in this divine condemnation, it is they who professed to be the (most) "wise"—σοφοὶ or philosophers: see v. 22.

Nor does this passage of Holy Scripture contain any sort of suggestion that men come to a knowledge of God by metaphysical thinking about "consciousness," or the "absolute," or the "conditioned," or "ontology," which is what all our later Christian writers have in mind in their "natural theology." In the first place, it is not at all an account of the *rise* and *advance* of the knowledge of God among men, but in the exact contrary, of their degradation from such knowledge at the first. We must then read the words of the apostle of God in accord with those of Moses the prophet of God, and understand

him to be telling how the sons of Adam fell from that state in which the knowledge of Himself which God had given to their forefathers, had come down to them, and was recalled to their attention every day by the "things which were made."

Besides, the metaphysicians in using these words of St. Paul, evidently think that he is speaking of subtle abstract thinkers like Plato (and themselves); whereas he is describing "every soul of man" in the common duties and destiny. He is not busy and interested in the ingenious play of his own intellect, or its struggle of logic with other such; he is thinking and speaking of man's state and Christ's salvation, as they are seen spread out before his exalted and inspired vision. He sees that the true knowledge of the true God is of the very *life* of every man, woman and child. If then they all had to reason like Plato, or Sir W. Hamilton, or even intelligently to follow *their* arguments, they never could know Him "whom *not* to know is *death* eternal."

Or are we asked to believe that the common herd are at all times vicariously represented for this by the philosophers? It almost seems as if this absurd notion were in our scholars' minds. Or is the theory that the mass of us beside the Platonists, etc., enjoy the *results* of their severe thinking in our thus knowing God without that thinking? This is as impracticable, if not quite so preposterous upon its face, as the other.

Nor can it be said that the metaphysical process always takes place in the ignorant man's mind

though he cannot state it in words. For if this be so, somebody would have been found to express it in the language of plain people, so that they could now follow the account of it with assent. Whereas any such attempt only sets them to wondering why they never went through this necessary approach to belief. It is so foreign to their experience, and so contrary to *fact*, that it unsettles their actual knowledge of God, and rather tends to make that most glorious truth fade from their apprehension like a dream and delusion. Certainly neither these nor any other arguments for natural theology are in Holy Scripture here, but these words of St. Paul are really contrary to them.

If any hesitate still to discard what has the authority of so many very learned and devout men, let them go with me in studying what has misled them. First, there is a strong fascination to minds of that turn to find enjoyment in such speculation and not to notice where it deviates from real truth. Then in this, though they set out at first to encourage the faith of all, they lose sight of this main object in a mere intellectual struggle with the champions of doubt (*gaudia certaminis*). As this "natural" and metaphysical religion is the very fighting ground of all the objectors to Christian faith, its defenders follow them there and fancy it their ground too. Without doubt something of the kind may sometimes be done to help convince unbelievers — only for that, and only then with a distinct assurance to them that our faith in God does not rest upon this imperfect

reasoning, but upon far better ground.* But for *aids* to faith—for what Christendom most needs now, the re-assurance of those who have always had (at least intellectually) the Christian knowledge of God—this is irrational and harmful. (See Appendix A, on the relation between Metaphysics and Theology.)

There is another great aspect of this matter suggested by one of the words just used—"intellectually." The philosophical defenders of faith treat it as merely *mental*. As in their view God is known only by an intellectual process through man's "consciousness," some of them speak of Him only as "Mind." This not only greatly contracts what we may and need to know of Him, but is exactly contrary to the direction He gives for attaining such true knowledge, and defeats the greatest advantage of that knowledge to us. Its corollary is, the more intellectual the man, the more godly—at least the more God-knowing. Now Holy Scripture (in this case words spoken by the very Word of God in person) has an altogether different account of this. It states a real order of the true knowledge of God, to some persons "revealed," from others "hidden." The former are the children, the poor, the "foolish"; the latter are "the wise and intellectual" (or "prudent," as our usually admirable version incorrectly renders. St. Matth. x. 25, &c.) So also, "If any man will *do His will*, he shall *know* of the *doctrine*," &c.—

* I am arguing now *not* with such, but with those who defend faith upon insufficient grounds, and with people who have not renounced that faith, but are doubting and perplexed. The others will have a few words of kindly expostulation at the end.

whether what is taught him concerning God by the Word be true and divine.—St. John vii. 17.

"Would you then insult and degrade religion by allying it with ignorance? Have not bigots done this in all ages, and so been the worst enemies of faith? For thus they have driven thoughtful and honest souls into unbelief; and so would you do now." To this I answer that our business is with this present, no matter what mistakes have been made in the past. There is certainly now no question of dungeons and racks for people who know too much. Did not God say what I have just quoted, to the effect that intellectual self-confidence hinders men from learning the highest truth, and that obedient humility promotes that knowledge? And have I not made the natural and true application of this to our present enquiry?

There is no greater illustration of this very misuse of "man's wisdom" in applying it to divine things, than that our Christian writers of great and deserved authority cannot see God's Word thus plainly forbidding their "Natural Theology." It is not even only in the plain passages already cited, but appears in all parts of Holy Scripture, especially the Gospels and Epistles, notably this very Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, as well as his first to the Corinthians.* It tells us all that whatever be the uses of human discovery in knowledge of a lower kind (or perhaps in cautious *illustration* of what we have learned directly in lowly obedience from a divine Word, in

* See Appendix C for a careful study of Rom. i. 18-ii. 16, and 1 Cor. i. and ii.

which the plainer and less intellectually ambitious people are *more* likely to be the wisest), here are matters in which it cannot teach anything, but will actually tend to mislead. I have never seen these reasonings of "natural theology" used as a mere help and illustration of what is taught by God's Word. And, however used, I have never seen these divine cautions added to the reasonings by those who should never forget the spiritual danger to us all, of which the love of God gives such plain warning.

To maintain the "Natural Theology" as meant only for the more intelligent people is of further ill effect, because no one can say where that line should be drawn. Besides, it is a suggestion that the simpler faith is false, as being irrational. It is true that the complete Christian knowledge of God is not *merely* intellectual; it includes something far greater. Yet *à fortiori* it includes that inferior part, which *may* be known to the wise and intelligent, while the higher part is hidden from them. That knowledge, *complete*, is the only real life of each soul. And so the love of God for men does not hide the knowledge of Him from them in metaphysics and "ontology," which would be to subject almost all those souls to certain death. Yet men can hide it from themselves, or themselves from it, *in* philosophy.

This erroneous tendency is in our day showing itself in a new "scientific" contradiction of the Word of God. It tends always to suppress the fact that man is a *degraded* creature, that is, one that has

sunk down from a higher original nature. But all our present "Science" is full of the theory that men were at first very brutish barbarians, upon which the lowest tribe now living are an improvement. So, with the disposition to "reconcile faith with modern thought," we tend to make such explanation of that sublime truth of the first man being most innocent and intelligent, and "walking with God" in perfect love, that it will be really denied.

All just reasons therefore lead to the conclusion that it is our true nature, as God has made us, to learn truth in religion from what He has directly revealed to us according as we have obedient humility, while this greatest truth is hidden from intellectual pride. This is the healthful and originally native air into which, notwithstanding a great fall of the race, we are yet born, by the gracious Divine love, and in which we may regain innocence and honor by the true knowledge of God. Why should "babes," for learning what is of their real life, go out of this warm light of home into the very dark and cold abandonment of negation and mere human thought, that they may afterwards regain this shelter by their own exertion?

Certainly, as we have seen before, no example or suggestion of such fatal folly is given us in the Book of God. But here is one of its statements of how men may come to know the highest truth: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." This

too was immediately addressed to men who lived long after Plato, and with whom the same question as now was raised, whether or not they should set this knowledge from Heaven above all other thought.

Nor have any apparent good effects of Natural Theology given the Christian scholars reason to adhere to it. Even the writer already quoted* says: "Philosophy has arrived at no definite results in theology properly so called, and never laid down any principle as to the nature of God which has not in its turn been assailed and upset."

Why then in our present investigation of a great religious subject should we resort to such a fruitless study as that? Rather let us proceed at once to the best, or rather the only real authority for Christians in such investigation, viz. God's direct *Word*, spoken to certain men for all, preserved upon earth in a divine society now for many ages, and especially written in a Book of God kept and certified to by that Church.

I may indeed challenge the assent to this of all Christians, even of those who contend most strenuously for Natural Theology. They will say that all its truth is declared yet more clearly in the Holy Scriptures of God; so that anything not appearing therein, especially if "rather repugnant thereto," is not of the true Natural Theology.

We have now arrived at these just conclusions: First, that if the assumed idea of "Laws of Nature"

* Christlieb — Modern Doubt and Christian Belief, p. 79.

be true, it is a truth of Religion. Secondly, that in such case it is made known to us as are other truths of religion in the Holy Scriptures. It follows of course, thirdly, that if the Scriptures contain no such doctrine, there is no sufficient ground for believing it; but, fourthly, if those Scriptures affirm the opposite, then we must dismiss the idea of "Laws of Nature" and a "Reign of Law" as a false speculation and assumption.

CHAPTER V.

COMPARATIVE CERTAINTY OF KNOWLEDGE BY
"SCIENCE" OR BY A WORD OF GOD.

IF we were to proceed now to the test of a "reign of law" by Holy Scripture, we might be met at once with this objection, that Scripture itself must be interpreted by Science wherever they come in contact, because this latter is the more *certain* sort of knowledge. Even some to whom this objection did not occur at first, might afterward have the force of our completed proof impaired, if not entirely overcome, by the suggestion, which is maintained by some writers of high character. Another notion belongs with it, and will also be discussed in what follows, namely, that Science and Religion are two equal, co-ordinate, and yet independent kinds of truth, neither of which can well maintain itself without the alliance of the other. We will therefore proceed now to a thorough examination of these assumptions.

The Almighty Lord having made man in His own image, and placed him on earth among the inferior creatures, may have given him (and we know in fact that He has) two general sources of knowledge. These may be distinguished in two aspects: first, as to the *subjects* and *importance* of knowledge, and, secondly, as to the *certainty* of it. We do know that He has done all this with the most loving wisdom and with the wisest love.

It is then the only rational conjecture that He has made the higher sort of knowledge the more certain. It is quite incredible that He did not make that which was the more important to man's well-being the more certain to his apprehension. Even this presumption would be increased if man had become in any way separated from this most necessary knowledge by a degradation which he could not of himself reverse; and if "God so loved the world" as to renew that knowledge, and so add to it as to give him thereby again "everlasting life."

What then in this great division is the higher knowledge? Certainly that of God Himself and of our relations to Him. What is the sort of knowledge most important to man himself? That of his spiritual well-being, of his highest nature, and of his longest enduring welfare. This in fact belongs in and can no way be separated from the *highest* knowledge mentioned just before—that of God Himself, and what the human soul has to do with Him and (by His will and law) with fellow-men. A knowledge of other creatures and of what promotes our merely animal, and even our *merely* intellectual, well-being—of what affects this for three or four or five score years of such life as we have now—is valuable, but certainly not in any just comparison with the other.

The two general *modes* in which God *gives* us knowledge, correspond to this distinction of the *sorts* of knowledge. The one is by direct speech of the Creator God to man. The other is by giving him the intelligence to observe and reason about his own

thoughts and the creation around him. The first impression from comparing these must be, that the method by direct words is the more certain.

Suppose we try it by our experience with fellow-men, so far as that is a safe test of these matters. If one in whom I am sure of love and truth to me — as a good father to a good son — tell me something in words, and I go out and see something that he has done which seems to me not to accord with the words, can I with any reason judge this latter more certain information from him than his express speech? Upon only one possible condition: namely, that he inadvertently, or with a mistaken impression of fact when he spoke, said what he would afterward himself correct. But this could not apply as to the Word of God.

Without doubt all such illustrations should be used with reverent caution, and all their just qualifications carefully stated. Thus, if it be said that God really speaks to us in His works, *intending* them as His communications of knowledge, which the father in the case supposed above does not, this assumes too much in either case. The comparison I have used is as just if the good father *did* intend such suggestion to his son, and did even say, "I shall also tell you some things by what you will notice I have *done*." If there seemed afterward a conflict between the actual words and what I inferred from my observations, would I think the inferences the more certain; or would I not more reasonably and modestly find the discrepancy to be caused by my

mistaken judgment of this latter information? We have indeed a proverb that "actions speak louder than words"; but that is an impeachment of the sincerity of the words.

On the other hand the objector as above, assumes positively that God does teach us truth in our science just as He does by His Word. We do not know this directly by the Divine Word. It is but an *inference*, like that scientific knowledge itself, from our reflection upon our own minds and the creation around us. But after much reflection I am unable to see how any such reasoning of ours should make a Christian as sure that God is thus instructing him as when He does it in this way, "Thus saith the Lord." It is an inference of an inference which we are thus comparing for certainty with the direct *Word* of God.

Besides, there is no such immeasurable difference of power and truth between the minds of any son and father, as between one of us or all of us combined and the knowledge of God. The son *can* in some degree try his father's words by facts; for us creatures to do so toward our Creator, would be mere folly.

If it be said that the uncertainty to us of the written Word of God lies in its coming to us through fellow-men, this can only be in so far as we reject an actual Divine inspiration of those writers. This is a great subject of itself. I do not undertake here to discuss the different theories of "inspiration" which theologians have put forth. But even upon the lowest Christian view of this as regards the Old and

New Testaments, there is no comparison of certainty between these and what some men write and others read as "Science." If I were arguing with those who think that the Lectures of Prof. John Tyndall, or even the Principia of Newton, have as much certainty of truth as the Gospels, or more, I would not suppose it to be a discussion between Christians.

In the comparison we must also consider how the different kinds of knowledge reach, not merely the few thousands of men who make or carefully follow the scientific processes of discovery, but all the minds of mankind, say at least of the present Christendom. For almost all of these the scientific knowledge comes to them in the writings — the books — of the scientific few, or more commonly of those who compile from them. So that this, besides its first uncertainty, has also in a greater degree that same element of imperfection in human authorship which is erroneously objected to our sacred writings, and without their inspiration.

But suppose it be still insisted that human language in writings is incurably uncertain as a medium of knowledge, as shown by the very disputes of men over the meaning of the Holy Scriptures. We need only reflect that this is even yet more true of scientific knowledge. For what does the discoverer and reasoner in this make haste to do at last, and account his greatest achievement? To state his result in the best *words*, so as to reach the minds of other men. Do not all such teachers send the rest of us rather to the libraries than the laboratories, and look to be

sustained, applauded and rewarded by the men who *read*? Our science owes everything to human speech. It cannot move without it; it cannot afford to disparage it.

Granted that the controversies of Christians prove that some men, and perhaps all in some degree, do not obtain in the Word of God perfect knowledge of the truth it contains. This can be best understood by moral causes—the prejudices and perversity of our loss of original innocence, some of which still remain, even in those most restored to goodness. Yet the useful knowledge which they do gain from the Word of God is of immense value. Man's language is, like his mind and all else about him, limited, and cannot contain all the Divine truth. But this imperfection of language goes to all its other uses in a yet greater degree.

The Divine Word is not merely a wonderful book cast upon the earth for each one to read or neglect or misinterpret as he pleases. It is the substance of all that God has said to men, preserved and proclaimed among them by a perpetual society of men under His patronage, and which is especially "the witness and keeper of Holy *Writ*." How entirely different in this respect is our science at its best! It is the mere substance or result of what individual men have written, or do now, without organization and without responsibility.

A greater difference yet is to be observed in that, whatever be the imperfection of human language, it is what God in His love has made for man as the

vehicle of truth; so its most complete and successful use should be when *He* by it conveys to them the highest and most useful knowledge. There is but one imaginable escape from the application of this to our present question. That would be in proving that the religious knowledge was much the less important to man's welfare. Assuredly, any argument founded upon that great fact, the love of God, ought to have the greatest force in this enquiry.

Very few will in terms deny that the moral and spiritual welfare of mankind is their chief interest. But even this does not adequately state the matter before us. In such discussion Christians should rather fix their thoughts from the first upon the real nature and life of man. They do know with absolute certainty of truth that the first and great commandment of this, its foundation principle and man's purpose of existence, is, to love God Himself with a personal affection which not only transcends, but virtually includes all other purposes and true motives. For this then all the other parts and powers of human life really exist. This is true even of the kindly affections, in various relations, towards fellow human creatures ("thy neighbor") which make up so much of a good life. It may even be wisely believed by us, with far more certainty than our sciences, that only for that same purpose exists all the "Nature" about which our other knowledge is concerned. This is what man was made to do (let us mark these words well,) "with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his mind." This is what

the perfect truth enjoins upon us all when it says: "*Whatsoever ye do*, do all to the glory of God": in a happy devotion to another person, which is honor and joy in itself. This is the knowledge which will survive with us and concern us as immortal forever; while we have no reason to think that the other will be anything to us after the four-score years or less of this life.

It follows therefore that far the most important knowledge for men is personally to know the Supreme Person, their relations and duties to Him, and with this all that belongs to their moral and spiritual life. If their original health of soul in this has been disturbed and really lost, their most urgent necessity is to know whatsoever the merciful love of God has provided for regaining it. Let us recall one or two of the plain sentences of Holy Writ in which the comparison of the Divine and spiritual knowledge with any other is given to us. "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal."—2 Cor. iv. 18. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."—St. Matth. vi. 33.

Considered then only as to comparative importance to man's purpose of existence and his welfare, I make bold to say that it is *certain* that God, who is love, would give him the religious knowledge with certainty, rather than the scientific and secular. Let us not fail to remember also that the former affects

the whole *present* life of all men more than the latter ; that upon the cheerfulness, patience, hope, peace of soul and kind affections which belong with it, depends far more than upon any physical well-being which the other *can* promote, whether the mass of mankind shall have the least pain and most enjoyment in this world.

It is incredible then that the One "from whom all goodness flows," and all knowledge proceeds, should have made the superior and more important truth uncertain and doubtfully dependent upon the inferior. Would the Good One leave His hapless creatures to be entangled by the apparent contradiction of their faith in His great salvation by inferior but more certain knowledge, so as to lose that faith? "Philosophers" may only smile at this, and feel safe in what they think their love of truth. They even believe themselves of a more kindly spirit towards fellow-men than those who "sound an alarm" against whatever impairs Christian faith among plain people. But what sort of philanthropy is that which is so engrossed with the intellectual pleasures of ten thousand men and a few bookish women and children, that it does not make any account of what goes into every house and hovel, and decides whether one hundred millions of souls shall be happy or no?

All these just aspects of the question converge upon the conclusion that the knowledge which God has given us directly in His Word is more certain than what we believe Him to have conveyed to us indirectly by scientific investigation. Yet there are

eminent and honest Christians who virtually deprive this truth of its effect by saying that indeed the Word of God is infallibly correct, but that our apprehension of it is incorrect whenever that does not agree with "science." Whereupon our very love of that Divine truth requires us to readjust this supposed meaning of the Holy Scriptures to the latest "science" as often as this discrepancy is noticed. This idea is sometimes accompanied by the suggestion that such discrepancies only occur where natural facts are but incidentally mentioned in the Divine Word, and do not really belong with the spiritual verities which it means alone to declare, and in which it is without error and beyond correction.

We might with entire truth and justice deny any just application of this to our present enquiry, and proceed at once to the examination of Holy Scripture contained in the chapters which follow. It is a mere assumption, offering no proof, and so entitled to no weight, and really at once begging the main question. It is even a double fallacy as "reasoning in a circle" thus: The "reign of law" cannot be disproved or tried at all by Holy Scripture, because that must be interpreted according to our modern science, which is itself founded upon the "reign of law." This, notwithstanding it has been already (see Chap. III.) shown to be a religious rather than a scientific question. In fact the objection really, though not in the intention of its authors, is but an evasion of what has already been proved of the superior certainty of the Word of God. Yet, as it

does entangle and confuse so many minds, let us carefully examine it in this shape.

We are all agreed that the Word of God does not intend to teach "science"; and also that in its incidental mention of ordinary natural facts it gives their appearance rather than their reality. So does all our language now after every discovery; and this not merely in the loose speech of ignorant people, but in the careful writing of the best informed. Our most exact men of science will describe their nicest observations thus: "Soon after the sun rose the clouds presented a very unusual appearance," etc. We agree that in the narrative parts of Holy Scripture some men speak according to the notions of their age and country, however incorrect these notions have since been discovered to be. This is true history. What these men said may not be true, but it is true that they said it, as much as that "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

Yet unless we believe that *whatever* the Holy Scriptures assert directly and as true, *is* true, we cannot fully believe in them as the Word of God. We cannot cure this by the distinction that whatever is moral and spiritual is the perfect divine; while what is natural and physical is the fallible human. For this finally leaves the question of what we are to believe from the Word of God to each man's fallible human judgment. This is precisely what is called "rationalism," and is rightly denied in matters of doctrine as overthrowing all real faith in God's Word. It is as fatally wrong in matters of fact; for

men will and actually do disagree in particular instances as to what is spiritual and what natural.

Besides, the spiritual and natural are usually so connected in Holy Scripture that they must be believed or denied together. Of this all miracles, prophëcies and even Divine promises of temporal good are some instances. If the spiritual truths of the Gospels are alone divinely true, while I may correct the rest by the "laws of Nature" known to us now, why should I believe something so contrary to these "laws" as that a man rose from the dead, or any of those great wonders which prove to us that we have any Word of God at all? Prof. Tyndall has in fact just applied this notion to the Song of the Angels at Bethlehem, in a way which I could not object to if I accepted the notion that our Holy Scriptures are true barely as to the spiritual.

It is fatally injurious to faith in the Word of God, because it suggests the question whether God would teach us what is true spiritually by means of what is false physically. To say that this is necessary from the limit of man's intelligence and the imperfection of his language, cannot protect that faith. For it violates our just instinct of thought of the almighty power of Him who made man and his language what they are, and could certainly adjust and use them to effect His loving will perfectly. Why then did He convey the spiritual truth in connection with physical error, which would expose me to my own intellectual doubts and the cavils of unbelievers? Are there not enough moral difficulties of faith in my own perverseness and my temptations?

Nor is it true that what is distinguished as natural and not spiritual and supernatural is never mentioned in Holy Writ as itself revealed, but only incidentally in revealing what is spiritual. In what sense is this true of the story of "the beginning" in the First Book of Moses? How in any fair reading of that can we understand it otherwise than as a direct and circumstantial account of the creation of all the "Nature" which we know? Why was this given unless to be believed? believed, not merely in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when geology and astronomy gave us a scientific explanation, but as well for the three or four thousand years between Moses and the modern "scientists"? We cannot expect men to believe with a high and earnest religious faith what could not but have been entirely misunderstood by the first hundred generations to whom it was revealed.

It is but another illustration of this mistake that some orthodox Christians try to escape from the scientific difficulties by discrediting those first great words of the Book of Genesis, as not having the same author as the rest, or, at least, being the mere impressions of the uninformed man, which we, of an enlightened age, can transform to a true account of the creation. What then shall we say of the Fourth Commandment? It is among the most purely moral and spiritual sayings of Holy Scripture. It has *no* defect of human composition, originally being "written with the finger of God upon a table of stone." Every element of majesty and authority

combines to make it as certainly "the Word of God" as anything in Holy Writ. Yet it contains not only a reference which gives the highest sanction to that account of creation impugned by our modern science, but even an affirmation of the very thing in it which is most objected to on the one side and most laboriously "reconciled" on the other. It is given as the Divine reason why we are to consecrate every seventh of our actual days to religion, because "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth," etc. Is this, too, an instance of the merely natural and physical side of Holy Scripture which is not inspired of God, and so is subject to correction by our science?

Then also, our science is by all confession of its intelligent votaries very incomplete. To think otherwise would be to stop at once all that triumphant progress which is so much admired. As it is supposed to have vast conquests before it, so, of necessity, it has as yet mastered but a very small part of its field. On the other hand, the Word of God to men was completed near two thousand years ago. While the other has been making its very incomplete advances, *it* has stood without change and without addition; all-sufficient for its superior purpose. Is it reasonable to adjust the greater to the less; the perfect to the incomplete? Must it not be a needless, a doubtful, and a very dangerous process? We shall find an illustration of how it impairs faith in our Word of God in many thousands of less informed minds, in the statements of those Christian

writers who are fascinated by it ; while under various better influences they still hold fast to the Christian creed. One such says : " If science really proves that the Mosaic account of creation is false, *then we will give up the Mosaic account, &c.* But it never will," &c.* Is that the language of such faith as St. Paul had ? I am sure that that faith, representing what we must all aspire to, and by holy inspiration warning us against " man's wisdom " in any such conflict, would say rather, " Then we will give up *the science.*"

I find as forcible an illustration of this tendency in the following sentence carefully published by a theologian of high repute as well in Europe as America as a sound divine and profound thinker : " Science has a foundation and so has religion ; let them unite their foundations," &c.† The former, indeed, we have reason to think contains much useful truth ; but it is not according to Christian faith to believe it worthy of any comparison with the Gospel of God, either for the importance or the certainty of its propositions.

But I would notice even more in detail what has appeared in a religious journal under a signature of high authority and well deserved influence.‡ In the midst of what is all expressed with the writer's elegance and force comes this passage : " We go farther still, and hold that in all that belongs to the natural form and expression of religion, deference

* Ed. Ch. Journal, N. Y., September 21st, 1876.

† Dr. McCosh.

‡ " F. D. H." in " Churchman," November 4th, 1876.

must be paid to any *proved* fact or *demonstrated* law in the physical world. That is, if the Bible should be found to affirm anything *as in the sphere of nature* which science can show to be contrary to nature, the written account must yield. Direct communication by God's works is there more sure than the indirect by human hands. In the sphere of the supernatural, the realm of the spirit, of the future life, of God and angels and of purely spiritual doctrine, science has no vocation or function; can affirm nothing and deny nothing, is simply incompetent. Here is the real security of a positive faith and her domain against all possible scientific or so-called scientific assaults. But when we come to records, to a Scripture, or to statements about natural things *as natural*, any ascertained verity in the rocks or stars or mathematics is good against any verbal representation," etc.

What is said in this of men's science being "direct communication" from God, and His Word "indirect," after the careful discussion of these matters in the first part of this chapter, hardly needs more for its refutation than its statement apart from the influence and the elegant rhetoric of the writer. But to make sure in so serious an affair, let us observe it in this just paraphrase: "Many different men in various ages and lands, observe and compare and generalize, and contend with one another, and write and publish about this world which God has made around us, what the rest of us receive as science. This is 'direct communication' from Him! 'Holy men of

old spake (and wrote, for 'all *Scripture* is given by inspiration of God,') as they were moved by the Holy Ghost': and this is the 'indirect by human hands'." Surely,

—"the force of folly could no farther go."

There is an advantage to truth in having that strange inversion of the terms "direct" and "indirect," which has been examined in the general in the first part of this chapter, reviewed in this instance of its statement by a writer who expresses the opinion of many, and by his well-deserved influence otherwise is likely, if not confuted, to extend it to more.

The "we" who are concerned are all of us to whom this question comes,—whether on account of modern science we ought to discard, or to change, our religious belief as we have understood the Church of Jesus Christ and the Holy Bible to declare that truth. The writer says we should not discard, but adjust the faith to the science, because the latter is a direct communication from God, while "the Bible," the "written account," "records" or "a Scripture," is "as in the sphere of nature," but "indirect." Why? Because whatever is written is "by human hands." But do not we, most (and virtually all) of us, including, I presume, the accomplished writer, learn our geology and astronomy "biology" and "sociology" from books, and thus "by human hands"? Is there such essential imperfection in written words as the vehicles of God's communication of truth to man, that even "inspira-

tion of God " cannot overcome it? And yet are they when they come to us in a book of Herschel or Hugh Miller (not to say Profs. Tyndall and Huxley), what is " good against any verbal representation " of the Holy Book? And does not the very scientific discovery, before it is put in words, come " by human hands "—having thus another remove from direct communication by the Great God to men, if we dare venture (as I do not) to call it such at all?

Why confine this to " the physical world "? Is not man's soul and his thoughts among " God's works "; and so our study of them " direct communication " about them from Him, which is thus " more sure than the indirect by human hands "—(meaning the Holy Gospels)? Who can draw the precise line in the Holy Scriptures between what is " as in the sphere of nature " and " the sphere of the supernatural "? The Duke of Argyll, who is a high authority in this sort of Christian science, labors hard,* and, as I suppose, his admirers think successfully, to prove that there *is no* such true distinction of natural and supernatural.

Will *F. D. H.* draw this distinction as to the beginning of the First Book of Moses? Will he point out why, for " the supernatural " or for " purely spiritual doctrine," any account of the creation should be given at all; and as something not meant to be believed when " ascertained verities in rocks, or stars, or mathematics " should be set forth by scientific men? And why is whatever such men convince us of in.

*"Reign of Law," Chap. I.

our day, an "ascertained verity," (just as the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, and the notion of the "four elements" were once); while no such thing can come to our knowledge about "natural things as natural" by the "verbal representation" of the Almighty Lord? To my best reason the exact reverse of this is true. In a conflict of this kind the ascertained verity will be rather in what God tells men directly in words than in their studies of His material creation, were we the original discoverers of science, and quite as much when we read their books, which are at best very small and imperfect copyings out of what they call a "Book of Nature."

It is also a very weighty suggestion of truth in such questions as these, to consider which of the methods compared would most promote the spiritual good of men. That we agree is the chief purpose of the Word of God. That is the main purpose of the Divine love in all that is about us, and all that we can know—"all things, visible and invisible." Humility and faith in God are our greatest intellectual necessities. Unbelief in these spiritual verities, dullness of perception that way, and pride of opinion, are our chief dangers. Which must be of best effect as regards this about anything: to believe more in the science of men, or the written Word of God?

"Here is the real security of a positive faith." Not in false distinctions and absurd comparisons; but in strong, simple, direct faith in God as He speaks to us in His Church and in His Book; so that what He thus tells us *about anything* is the absolute

truth, no matter what else seems to contradict it. If we adhere to this we need not mind the reproaches of those who call us "blind" and "narrow," and say that in our panic at the advancement of knowledge we "refuse to make room for all the facts." That is a mere begging of the question. That question is precisely: "*What are the facts?*" We say, first and certainly, whatsoever God has told to man in His most august and gracious Word; and secondly, and probably, many curious things that we can find out by the notice and reflection of men, accumulating through all the ages.

CHAPTER VI.

EXAMINATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE—OLD TESTAMENT.

WHAT follows is the result of a complete and careful reading of the Holy Scriptures, with the purpose of finding and following the truth in this matter, without regard to previous impressions. All was thus read, so that nothing should escape attention, whether belonging directly to this enquiry or only incidental thereto. Some eight thousand such passages have been carefully examined. The general method has been as follows: Every passage has been noted which (a) has ever been suggested as speaking of, or alluding to, "laws of nature," or which being of the same general purport as these, or for any other reason might possibly be cited to that effect; (b) such as plainly mention "natural" occurrences as being done by the immediate act of God; (c) all relating to creation; or (d) to the work of God in providence; or (e) to miracles; or (f) to His granting the prayers of men for material good; and (g) prophecies.

There is a curious suggestion in the very numbers found under these heads, as follows; and it is not without force to the candid mind in the study which is before us. There are of such, (a) 12, (b) 55, (c) 240, (d) 4000+, (e) 3600+, (f) 334, (g) 2000+. Compare especially those enumerated as (a) and (b) which present the issue most distinctly. Those which

declare expressly the reign of God are more than fourfold all that can be assumed as suggesting a "reign of law," while the hundred times as many others throw their incidental weight the same way. But the real and conclusive judgment must be found in the scrutiny of the several passages as we proceed through Holy Scripture, and the combined result of them all.

Prof. Jowett* makes some very correct and forcible observations upon the error of constructing what is set up as a great doctrine of religion out of very scant material in the Book of God. He is, indeed, mistaken in the instance and application which he gives, but no one can dispute his scholarship and critical acuteness; nor could any one impeach his authority in our question upon the ground of orthodox bigotry.

He says: "How slender is the foundation in the New Testament for the doctrine . . . ! two passages of St. Paul at most, and those of uncertain interpretation! The little cloud no larger than a man's hand has covered the heavens. To reduce such subjects to their proper proportions we should consider first, *what space* they occupy in Scripture; secondly, how far the language used concerning them is *literal* or *figurative*; thirdly, whether they agree with the *more general* truths of Scripture and our moral sense, or are not 'rather repugnant thereto'; fourthly, whether their *origin* may not be prior to Christianity, or traceable in the after history of the Church; fifthly, how far to ourselves they *are* any more

*1 Ep. of St. Paul to the Thess. with critical notes, p. 162.

than *words*." Our present enquiry will give us a surprising illustration of each of these rules.*

We will proceed upon this study of Holy Writ in its historical order. The ONE who is the Cause and the Reason of all else begins His written Word to mankind with an account of how He created all things. That He should thus give a "cosmogony" or account of the creation,† seems to displease some of our men of science. But to Christian belief this notion of theirs appears absurd. For He, and really He alone, could tell of the creation. And as it is the assumption and suggestion of all His Word that all this was done so that man might love and "glorify" Him, we would naturally hope to find it told in that Word. A "cosmogony" of man's devising, and that brought forward only after a hundred generations of them had lived and died—a matter of hypotheses and inferences—could not at all hold its ground against a true historical and Divine account of the creation. It does not mend this that our intellectual acrobats walk so boldly on the slender wires of their theories over the vast abysses of the past; or that they insist positively that their geology is the Word of God, written by Him upon the rocks to tell the story of that past.

* See Appendix C for the precise method and rules by which this examination of Holy Scripture has been made.

† Love of truth requires us to translate such terms into plain English; for really, while our ambitious modern speculators may have a dialect of their own, made up of pedantic terms either obsolete or fresh-coined, they have no right to force it into the correct use of the language, especially where, as in this case, it may hide the real force of their thoughts from their readers. I cannot be mistaken in what I say above of men of science objecting to a Divine "cosmogony," since one so eminent as Prof. Tyndall, and who knows how to set his thoughts in most clear and eloquent phrase, has done this distinctly in his famous Belfast address.

In this Divine story of the Creation there is no mention of any "laws of nature," or of any mechanism set in motion by the Creator which corresponds to a "reign of law." Those who already held that notion might fancy that they found a suggestion of it in the third day's creation, of the tree and plant "whose seed is in itself." But simply and fairly this means the first creation of what had life, and with it growth and decay, their perpetuation being not as with some things like "the everlasting hills," by the continuance of what was first made, but of other individuals of the same kind in succession. This reproduction and new life might then as well be by the direct will of God as was the first,—His working in the usual order which we see, but always as free to do otherwise, even in vegetable life, as when Aaron's rod budded, or in animal, as when that rod became a serpent.

It is related that after the sixth day of Creation, God rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. All reflection shows that this must be a sublime mystery. Some venture to say that it must mean that He, having constructed the universe as a machine, and set it in motion, withdrew from any power or interference about it (as some say, except upon rare and extraordinary occasions). But we can think this only by so mistaking the Almighty power as to suppose that it needs intervals of rest and refreshment; or by fancying that because we cannot give any other explanation we are compelled to take up this semblance of one.

This is just as true of the explanation that God ceased then to give existence, and afterward only "preserved" and "upheld" it; that is, if by this it is meant, as seems to be in the minds of those who say it, to exclude Him from the exercise of as much power as before, so relieving Him from exhausting all His force, and giving opportunity by repose to regain what was consumed; or as if the created universe were a machine of which He is the great balance-wheel or the engineer.

Holy Writ does not say in terms, *or in expressions any way approaching it*, that God had made a mechanical universe which He left to its "laws." It does say that He "rested," which plainly does not mean such rest as we need and take after exertion. "He fainteth not neither is weary." Then let us "rest" upon the sublime mystery of the words with patient and silent reverence. Or if any studious conjecture of their meaning be made, let it rather be this: that from thenceforth He made no *new* forms of being, but repeated in order and series those first created.

Certainly, so far from this meaning a mechanical, invariable "reign of law," we find forthwith upon this rest, certain other things done which cannot but be thought outside of such laws, and as done for a special occasion by the direct will of the Supreme Lord. Of these are the placing man in Eden, which had been expressly prepared for him, the setting within it of the two mystical trees, the direct speech of God to man, especially in regard to his use of knowledge, and the temptation through the ser-

pent. All these are related in the most literal and natural way without any suggestion of "laws" which are "suspended," or of any other "laws" brought into notice, as the fashion of argument is rather now, or, we may add, of any such "laws" as existing at all.

The same method is used in relating the fall of man, God's declaration to him of his change of life as regards labor, suffering and death, and his expulsion from Eden. Some will refuse all force to this by saying that all the story of Paradise and the Fall is but a fable or allegory. Their proof of this is merely to deride any one who takes it for history. But derision is not reason. It can be as easily used against what is most true and sacred as against bigoted credulity. Wise faith can no more reject these incidents from literal history than it can anything else supernatural in the Word of God.

In the same way is the history of man brought down to the days of Noah. The tragic affair of the two oldest sons of Adam is related with much which God *said* to Cain. Then Enoch does *not* die as is "appointed to all men"; and yet this is not told as our philosophers, who know of a "reign of law," would relate it now.

Then comes a great miracle of God. It is quite against the imagined "reign of law" that this is foretold to one man. God says to him that He is displeased with the "cosmos" as He has maintained it now for the twelve longest generations of men, on account of the wickedness of this master-creature

which He had made in His own image. For this He will, after a while, by a flood of waters, suddenly destroy almost all of them, and of the other living creatures. So at the time appointed the usual order of rain and sunshine, of land and water, was entirely changed for many days, and that of vegetable and animal life interrupted for a whole year.

It would make but little difference in the force of this fact as bearing upon the question before us, even if we were to concede that this Flood did not cover all the globe, but only that fiftieth part of it perhaps then known to mankind. When the Flood ceased and the habitable earth reappeared, the few survivors of mankind offered worship to the Holy and Almighty God. And then, in gracious notice of this, "The Lord said in His heart . . . while the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease."*

Certainly this is more like a mention of the supposed "reign of law" than anything else so far in Scripture. Yet upon candid study it really forbids that notion. God did not say this at the Creation, or as any way relating to it. It is separated from that event by the vast lapse of sixteen centuries, during which He appears to us as "upholding (and doing) all things by the (mere) word of His power" and will. Nothing in the words suggests His "imposing a law upon Himself." All declare His merciful and loving purpose and promise to a man who

* Gen. viii. 21, 22.

adored Him. And so it is given as His prophecy and covenant to us all of mankind. As between the physical and the spiritual, the natural and the supernatural, that great saying of God belongs altogether with the latter.

Another great incident of these events is to the same effect. God spoke then to mankind some other words of blessing and promise; of a "covenant that the waters should no more become a flood to destroy all flesh," and that something should thereafter, at times, appear in the clouds as a "token" of this covenant.* All of these words are worthy of deep study, while they are, indeed, too great for our comprehension. This, however, is true of all the greatest truth which we receive directly from God; and so, if we demand as a condition of belief such entire comprehension, we never shall believe; and so would remain ignorant in spite of the greatest goodness of God in instructing us.

But giving faith and thought to what God has told us of the bright vision of the rainbow as we often behold it in the sky, it is plain that only after the flood did this appear to the sight of man. Now nothing could be more unlike the entire notion of the "reign of law" than this. It discloses a Person clothed with "all power," who, after day and night have followed one another in the eyes of man for near 6000 times, and when the longest living generations of them that ever were have come and gone

* Gen. x. 1-17.—Even the writer of the Article "Noah," in Smith's Bible Dictionary, which is quite given to the rationalistic, scientific method, admits that the Divine history plainly affirms that the rainbow first appeared after the Flood.

again and again, begins before all mankind an entirely new phenomenon to take place frequently until the end of the world, and that for a purely spiritual purpose.

The idea of a "reign of law," on the contrary, assumes that however this order of "Nature" first began, or whether or not it ever had a beginning, all has proceeded always without variation. Even those who, while allowing this in general, have no doubt of the miracles related in our Holy Scriptures, allow them to be but single and infrequent variations from an exact mechanism which began before man inhabited the world. But here is a new general fact added to the usual order at least 1600 years after that began. Remember that those very reasonings of our "science" from a "reign of law" which have been the most generally accepted by Christians, have their whole force in the assumption that what we observe now in rocks or seas or stars can be traced back according to forces and processes now at work, so that we can tell with certainty that the earth existed a vast while before history, say 100,000 years, and can tell also what was doing upon it in the intervening time. Whatever suggests that *anything* in "Nature" began only by the will of God since the race of man has lived, shakes all that science. So it is safe to say that not only does nothing so far in the Book of Genesis tell us of a "reign of law," but that this passage of the tenth chapter as well as that in the eighth chapter is plainly against it.

The Divine history continues in the same way

down through the times of the patriarchs for eight centuries more. In this we have more than a hundred different mentions of miracles, without one suggestion of their being "interruptions of laws of Nature," or any of the like expressions with which all modern writings are filled. We have about as many mentions of natural events as being simply what was done at the time by God, and without a word of their being according to any such "law." The same is true of the several accounts in that history, of things being done by Him, whether natural or supernatural, in favorable answer to the prayers of men. But while in all this Holy Writ so far there is nothing said of a "reign of law," there are such sayings as these: (to one doubting the promise of a gracious miracle) "Is anything too hard for the Lord?"—[Gen. xviii. 14.] (A holy patriarch by inspiration of God prophesying blessings to his son) "Therefore, God give thee of the dew of heaven and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine."—[Gen. xxvii. 28.] (Another patriarch declaring the gracious things which God had done, even by means of man's evil deeds) "And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth and to save you by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God."—[Gen. xlv. 7, 8.]

The history of the days of Moses and Joshua which succeed is crowded with miracles and providences; as also with mentions of the Creation, and of God's granting blessings, both temporal and spiritual,

in answer to the prayers of men. In all this too there is nothing said, even by way of most remote allusion, of any "laws of Nature." There is this silence in a thousand such sentences, when, if that be the truth of God, true of Him in "His works," one cannot conceive why it should not be spoken of in explanation of a providence, in enhancement of a miracle, in true account of Creation, in assistance of embarrassed faith, in any natural statement of these great events. It would be so related if one of those who now believe in a "reign of law" were the original historian.

There is also in the narrative a natural mingling of the normal with the supernatural, as if the one were as easy for the Great Worker as the other, both alike His immediate will, and equally easy of belief to one who believed in God. This accords exactly with the idea of all events since, being by God's direct will as much as the original Creation; but it has no agreement with the notion of "natural law."

It is also related in this history that God declared His name to be I AM. This is awfully sublime and full of deep thought for all the sons of men. One such true thought is that there is no past or future with Him; that He knows and does all things as if in the same moment of time. Then no man can ever, without great folly, say that He is under limits of power, such as would compel us to extend great constructions over long ages; or can affirm that the mighty sayings in which He tells us of "stormy winds" and all other things in this Creation "fulfill-

ing His *word*," must be hyperbolical figures of speech, because the greatest thing for a man to do would be to invent an automatic machine for such purposes, and leave it to its motion rather than put forth will upon each occasion. It also reminds us that for Him to wish anything, and that thing to take place, are identical.

This great idea descending to us from Heaven itself thus speaks in the thousand sentences of the history of Israel down to the age of David—sentences in which God says to that people: "If you walk in my statutes, etc., then I will give you rain in due season," etc.—[Lev. xxvi. 4]; and such replies as this to any one who doubts relief which He promises in a great extremity: "Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not."—[Numb. xi. 23.]

Now begins the most intellectual age of Israel. For we have henceforth in the Holy Scriptures not only the history continued, but also a series of authors and writings, beginning with the great King David and his son, which are chiefly, as regards their human composition, poetical and eloquent. But before we examine these poetical Scriptures, we may well proceed with the sacred history to the end of the Old Testament. In all this too we find miracle and providence frequently narrated or alluded to with the same sublime naturalness; but not one word of "laws of Nature," or anything equivalent to that idea.

The first of the poetical books is that of Job,

which carries us again far back into the patriarchal times. This is true not only of its scene of narrative, but of its probable author. Both action and author appear to be at least as old as the days of Moses.* The language is a most wonderful combination of exquisite simplicity and sublime imagination. After reading more than half through this book and finding much that is powerfully said about the immediate will of God in all things, as in the other Scriptures, we find almost the first passages of Scripture which have been cited by Christian writers in favor of the notion of "laws of Nature."

The first is this, which I give at length for its full meaning and connection, the precise words which have been cited by some authors as just mentioned being enclosed in brackets. "Whence then cometh wisdom, and where is the place of understanding? God understandeth the way thereof, and He knoweth the place thereof. For He looketh to the ends of the earth and seeth under the whole heaven : [to make the weight for the winds, and He weigheth the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of thunder. Then did He see it and declare it ; He prepared it, yea, and searched it out. And unto *man* He said, Behold the fear of the Lord, *that is wisdom* ; and to depart from evil, *that is understanding*."]—[xxviii. 20-28.]

The phrase in the twenty-sixth verse, "a decree for the rain," is assumed to mean that God has

* Their being of a later date would not alter their main effect in this enquiry.

"subjected Himself" to supposed "laws of Nature." To me it seems simply one of the great figures of this God-inspired poet, in which he compares the will of God in Creation and in the movements of all things, to the edicts or decrees of a prince. Were the language literal, a *decree* need not mean, and usually did not mean, to the men of the East an enduring general law to subjects, but only the will of a sovereign declared about some one person or for some single transaction.* Thus, here it would literally mean each single act of God's will in Providence. The entire passage as quoted above, when read with care, is no proof of a "reign of law," and surely does not affirm any such law *imposed upon Himself* by the Great King. It agrees best, as all this Book of Job does, in some two hundred and fifty other passages which speak of Providence, Creation and miracles, with the idea that God does all things always by His immediate will, and not by an interposed machinery of "forces," or "laws." Does not that divine argument actually *intend* to tell men that it is only folly in them to claim a knowledge of how "*God understandeth*" the winds and lightnings? concluding so plainly, "Unto *man* He said, Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom" for them.

This applies in like manner to other passages sometimes cited as telling of "laws of Nature," as, "Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds [Job xxxvii. 16], and brake up for it (the sea) my decreed

* *Pro re nata.*

place, (or, as in the margin of A.V., “established my decree upon it”) and set bars and doors and said, Hitherto shalt thou come and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days? . . . Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven?” [xxxviii. 10, 12, 33.]

These few most splendid and sublime imaginations of devout poetry appear in the midst of a long procession of beautiful verses which all speak of God as doing all things by His immediate will and work. Thus, “He maketh small the drops of water, etc.” [xxxvi. 27]. “By the breath of God frost is given” [xxxvii. 10], &c., &c. The general purpose of it all is plainly to reprove the presumption of mankind; as *e. g.* what is said as quoted above, of “the ordinances of heaven,” is immediately followed by such questions to *us* as this: “Canst *thou* send lightnings that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are?” [xxxvii. 35.] Thus, would *not* God speak to man if He were only like him—even on ever so much greater a scale—a contriver and constructor of mechanism.

We may pause here and reflect that we have now gone down about 4000 years of divine history, and searched nearly half through the Book of God, yet found nothing either in the story of Creation or the chronicles of Providence and miracles for that vast period in support of the idea of “laws of Nature,” except the verbal resemblance of two words, “decrees,” “ordinances”; and these used in a figurative way in very splendid poetry, which of all sorts of

writing is the farthest removed from exactness of expression.

Should any one account for this general silence of God's Word about such "laws, etc.," upon the ground that those were very ignorant ages as compared with ours; and that since

"Nature and Nature's laws lay hid in night,"

the Divine compassion would not obscure the spiritual truth which was to be revealed, by mention or allusion to the physical truth; let him candidly observe a fact which our present study has just brought before us. It is in the Book of Job, in the least "scientific" age, and among the least scientific race of men, that we have but just now found the words "decrees" and "ordinances" that are cited as such mention. Even in this view, which is the more probable, that those words are mere figures of speech about what God does, or that they tell mankind of invariable "laws of Nature" established by Him?

Then, too, in the Book of Psalms, mostly composed some 600 years later, with all its glorious imaginations, we find only one or two phrases upon which the same argument has been attempted. Thus, "The day is Thine; the night also is Thine. Thou hast prepared the light and the sun. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth. Thou hast made summer and winter" [lxxiv. 16, 17]. "He hath made a decree which shall not pass" [cxlvii. 8]. This, too, sets forth with poetic beauty the con-

tinual power of God. As for any "reign of law," it rather denies, and certainly does not state that.

On the other hand, the Psalms are throughout and everywhere ablaze with the glory of this vision of the immediate will of God in all things alike, whether in Creation, miracle or Providence. They summon every form of beauty to express this, personifying and calling upon every creature to join in the chorus of worship. More than a thousand such passages could be cited. These are but specimens of them all.

"This poor man cried and the Lord *heard him*, and *delivered* him out of all his distress" [xxxiv. 6]. "O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast" [xxxvi. 6]. "These wait all upon Thee that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That Thou givest them they gather. Thou openest Thy hand; they are filled with good. Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled. Thou takest away their breath; they die and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth" [civ. 27-30]. Observe of this last passage, that all the things which we commonly speak of as the course of Nature are enumerated as the immediate acts of God; the support of all animal life, the withdrawal of that life, and the succession of it in others of the same kind.

So also, when by a sublime figure of speech all the things which God has made are called upon to join with us in singing His praise; even "dragons and all deeps; fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind

fulfilling His word," no such things are supposed and summoned as "forces of Nature." Do you reply that this would have been unmeaning to the men then living for lack of the science which we now have? But why is it not there for these wiser generations of ours? Granted that the Word of God being meant to teach spiritual, and not physical, truth, *might* speak only of the former. Yet none the less if it did illustrate the former by the latter, He, to whom all truth is always known, would teach the spiritual by the natural *truth*, and not by repeating to men their superstitious ignorance.

The writings of Solomon, which follow next in Holy Writ, tell us nothing of the "reign of law." Yet he was specially an observer of natural life, and given to philosophic reflection. These writings contain many mentions of Creation and Providence, but none of miracles. Some who maintain the "reign of law" have cited for their purposes what is said in the III. and VIII. Chapters of the Book of Proverbs concerning "*wisdom*." It may be that if this notion were otherwise and already proved, it would be a fair conjecture that those sublime and mystical words intended it. But that they are any proof of it, or would ever seem so, except by prepossession or prejudice in its behalf on the part of some who feel bound to secure for it some authority in Holy Scripture, seems to me most unlikely. Let them speak for themselves at length.

"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth, by understanding hath He established the heavens.

By His knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew" [Prov. iii. 19, 20]. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way before His works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills were brought forth. While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens I was there; when He set a compass upon the face of the depth; when He established the clouds above; when He strengthened the fountains of the deep; when He gave to the sea His decree that the waters should not pass His commandment; when He appointed the foundations of the earth—then I was by Him as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." [viii. 22-31.]

These words do not directly speak of a "reign of law." If any such force in them is claimed from the use of the terms "decree" and "commandment," this has been already answered in the comment upon the sentence of the Book of Psalms which resembles this. And so it would be a very fanciful assumption for any one to insist that to say that "*wisdom*" was with God in Creation is the same as to say directly that He in the beginning set up invariable "laws

of nature." We may leave it to any plain and unprejudiced man whether we are not right in saying, that whatever it may say, it does *not* say that.

Can we not, in all these mighty and mystical sentences, hear simply that the wisdom of God is greater and older than the stars? Must men have the notion of a "reign of law" before these other words have any meaning to them: "O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, *in wisdom* hast Thou made them all?" [Ps. civ. 24.] Had all those sayings no sense to the fifty generations of men who read them before that notion was thought of? Have they none now to the vast number of honest Christians who like me believe them without that? May we not even have a greater adoring admiration for that wisdom in immediate will and power?

If devout men had never been able to find meaning in the words, and had waited in despair of it until modern science had offered this interpretation, we might, perhaps, allow it for lack of any other. But beside the sublime praise of Him whose "thoughts are very deep," which devout readers have found in them from the first, we have an application of them made by the great Church writers of St. Athanasius' age. This has also seemed to speak, with the very voice of all the Church ever since, when it declares its *belief* that Our Lord was "begotten before all worlds." No orthodox Christian can lightly assume the "reign of law" as the reasonable application and dismiss this as the fanciful, when he has once noticed how to the first words, "The Lord possessed me in

the beginning"; these words respond from the Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Nevertheless, let us further enquire whether this account of God's "wisdom" in the beginning, does, if not in terms, yet in substance and by fair reasoning, teach us of a "reign of law." The Book of Proverbs is an instruction to us, not in physical science, but in morals and religion. With this purpose in all parts, and often it speaks of "wisdom," and personifies it as the true principle of men in their conduct toward God and their fellows. It repeats that great saying of the Book of Psalms that "the fear of the Lord (reverent and obedient love of Him), is the *beginning of wisdom*." [Ps. cx. 10.—Prov. ix. 10]. It tells the same great truth again in nearly the same terms as do other parts of Holy Scripture, and with such related sayings as that, "the fear of the Lord is to hate evil," &c.

Thus, this very passage, fairly read in its connection, tells us of the great wisdom of God, as a reason why we should be wise in true religion and all goodness. Can we then with reason think that the Divine wisdom means the intellectual contrivance of the universe and the mechanical skill of setting it in motion, like a vast machine, as we sometimes call human inventors wise?

Finally, to do justice to both sides of this question, let us paraphrase and amplify, in that supposed sense, the words which are claimed as involving the idea of a "reign of law." Thus: "A *wisdom* which

was with God in Creation must mean that He economized force and time by such arrangements of all matter (and spirit, too, for that matter), as that He might spare His continual attention and exertion, and might leave this creation to its automatic motion. This would be the highest achievement of a man in the use of force and motion, and so it must be 'the wisdom of God.' "

That is really the argument. This is what the words mean, if in them God speaks to us of a "reign of law." What must we judge when ingenious men can find in Holy Scripture no better proof of their belief than such far-fetched interpretations as that? On the other hand, there is one thing said to all mankind in the Holy Scriptures of God with much frequency, solemnity and plainness of speech, namely, that pride of intelligence is one of their greatest dangers and infirmities. "The Law and the Prophets," the Gospels and the Epistles join in this, with only the difference that the New Testament, as the more complete and spiritual, is more express in such doctrine. Surely that folly could find no more dangerous exercise than in reasonings about *the works of God* which are not full of humility and reverence. And thus, not to anticipate the commands of Our Lord to be as humble as little children, and the warnings of His Apostles against "man's wisdom," this divine "wisdom of Solomon," in the Book of Ecclesiastes as well as that of Proverbs, so far from encouraging us to put forth theories of what God must have done in the beginning, formed from our ambitious studies, teaches us to learn such things only from His mouth.

The very passage we have been examining is really a warning against such conceit. It tells us of the great and unapproachable glory of God in wisdom; and then that, *for us* "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Beyond doubt to me this means that, instead of fancying that by intellectual research we shall come to know much of what He has done and is doing, it is reverence, humility and obedient love for Him that must precede and accompany all such true acquirements. How well we all know that the science which insists upon a reign of law does not always begin or proceed with reverent piety. Some of its most successful votaries, as they advanced in and became absorbed in it, have receded from all religion. Theirs, then, was not the wisdom which Solomon commended in men, nor their favorite notion of "Nature" that which he, at the same time, was revealing to us as the wisdom of God.

On the contrary, those inspired writings of his even agree with the rest of Holy Scripture in frequent mentions of all events as the immediate work of God. For example: "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life" [Prov. xxii. 14]. "A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth and honor," &c. [Eccl. vi. 2.]

Examining next the Prophets, numbering fourteen different writers, and including more than a fourth part of the Old Testament, we find them full of sublime mentions of Creation, miracles and Providence. Yet among two thousand such passages noted there are

only some six which have ever been cited as suggesting a "reign of law." Even then it is only by that unreasonable process of seizing upon a slight verbal resemblance, and imagining in splendid figures of speech something to be declared which no one would ever find there unless he were in search of support of a notion elsewhere derived. Thus they correspond to those brought forward by some in support of the same notion, from the other poetical books. The same observations apply to them and need not be repeated.

They are as follows: "Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord. Will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree that it cannot pass it? And though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it" [Jer. v. 22]. "Yea the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord" [Jer. viii. 7]. "Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night; which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar, the Lord of hosts is His name. If these ordinances depart from before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever" [xxxix. 35, 36]. "If ye can break my covenant of the day and my covenant of the night, that there

should not be day and night in their season, then may also my covenant be broken with David, my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne" [Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21]. "If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob," &c. [*Ibid.* 25, 26].

Of the first of these passages, it is an easy question whether it is literal or figurative. If the former, then has the sea a restless *will*, prone to disobey God; tossing its mane in rage and roaring with baffled desire. But we none of us think that. We justly see in this a noble figure of the supreme will of God, in which even the mighty ocean is represented as a self-willed, yet subjugated subject, upon whom, *after such attempts*, a perpetual decree of restraint is imposed. The more careful our study of the words, the more it will appear that they suggest *the opposite* of "natural law," namely, the immediate power of God.

So also in the second passage, the migration of birds is spoken of not as some mechanical order established at the creation, but as if each year they heard the voice of their Lord and obeyed Him. This is but a figure of speech to rebuke the disobedience of men who *have* laws given them and a *will* with which they can obey? So it is; and therefore least of all is it any proof of a "reign of law." The same judgment applies to the other sayings about "covenants" and "ordinances" of sun, moon and stars, or of day and night. The allusion of these is naturally

rather to the spiritual and supernatural blessing bestowed upon mankind after the flood, than upon what was set up in the beginning. Anyway there is nothing about "laws of Nature" in them, but those great and gracious ways of God to us alike in "all things visible and invisible." There is in both the same free and instant power by which "He doeth according to *His will* in the armies of heaven," in a usual, *regular order* of loving-kindness to men. And He reminds us of these covenants and blessings of things temporal to affirm other promises, even of spiritual good. We have as much right to reduce these to "natural law" as the others.

But this is not all that we may learn about this question from the Holy Scriptures of the Prophets. To confront these few weak and far-fetched attempts at proof upon one side, we could summon from them *thousands* of sentences which reveal to us with directness, the Great and Gracious One doing everything in "Nature" as immediately as when He said, "Let there be light!" These few may represent them all.

"Lift up your eyes on high and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; He calleth them all by names; by the greatness of *His* might, for that *He* is strong in power, *not one faileth*. . . . The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary; there is *no searching* of *His* understanding" [Is. xl. 26, 28, &c]. (How exactly does this agree with the thought that all things are and move by the present will of God, and not by forces which

He set up thousands of years ago ! How naturally we can understand it is a reproof of those who think that men of our day have searched the understanding of God and found that He would “faint and be weary” with such constant work ; and that stars and seasons fail not, not “for that He is strong in power,” but because of the might of an ancient “reign of law.”)

“When He uttereth His voice there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. He maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures” [Jer. x. 13]. “For wisdom and might are His ; and He changeth the times and the seasons” [Dan. ii. 20, 21]. “And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing ; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou ?” [Dan. iv. 35]. “The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways” [Dan. v. 23]. “Rejoice in the Lord your God, for He hath given you the former rain moderately, and He will cause to come down for you the rain,” &c. [Joel ii. 23-27]. “Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house that there may be meat in my house, and *prove me now* herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the

fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field," &c. [Mal. iii. 10, 11.]

Notice the natural force of all this class of passages as compared with the others. Observe this contrast in the number, in their easy and obvious meaning; in the divine power of their very words to "exalt the Lord Our God" and to increase our faith in Him. Do they not fit only to the thought that we may think of Him and adore Him and call upon Him in prayers, as One who does all things in person and now? If we could deny that these divine sentences directly teach men to think so, could we question that they encourage them in that thought if already entertained? Does not the opposing notion of a "reign of law" jar harshly upon the sayings of the Prophets?

It is a favorite observation of our modern science, that in degree as men have been ignorant and superstitious, they have ascribed all things to divine acts; and that as they come to know more they learn that all these things are according to general law. This would apply exactly to these and all like sayings of the Old Testament. It would be in effect to say that men, moved by the Holy Ghost, misrepresented true religion, at least that God allowed them to echo and so to encourage the superstitious follies of ignorance. Observe, in further objection to this notion, that these same teachings run through all the ages and all the writers of the Old Testament. They are in the story of "the beginning"; in the manly sim-

plicity of thinking found among the free tribes of the first ages ; in the intellectual and spiritual refinement of the first (and greatest) of the kings of Israel ; in the first Prophets, who knew all the science and reasonings of the Chaldeans, and in the last of them who looked toward the dawn of "the new law." But it is by the last that our question must be mainly tried, by that "perfect day" of light intellectual and spiritual for all mankind, the New Testament of OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.

CHAPTER VII.

EXAMINATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE—NEW TESTAMENT.

WE come now to the brightest and plainest and complete Word of God written, "the New Testament of OUR LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST." We have already gone over that larger part of Holy Writ in which, as relating the Creation itself and four thousand years of Providence and miracles afterwards, we might have felt sure that we should find any truth there might be of a "reign of law," told us directly and by many plain allusions. We have found nothing of the kind; nothing which could be so quoted, unless in the way of fanciful resemblance or very remote conjecture.

But in the Scriptures which we are now to "search," we shall be sure to find the conclusive truth. These will either at last reveal "the reign of law" in "Nature"; or dismiss the notion from our knowledge as untrue. Some of the greatest matters of religion were reserved to this *New Testament*. The intelligence of man in divine things was in the earlier period treated as in a state of nonage. So we *might* suppose that the Creator reserved this disclosure of "natural law," or such recognition as complete religious truth must make of it, if true, to the Church founded upon the Redeemer of mankind. Now that "the Light of the World" appears in person, and the complete knowledge of God rises

upon earth like the sun, this truth would certainly no longer be withheld. At the very least, as I have suggested, there would be some notice of it in speaking of those matters in which it could not but touch upon the glory of God and men's faith in Him; so that when these wiser ages of Christendom should come, men would see their faith in God to be in full accord with that truth.

The result of a careful study of the New Testament is in general that there is not one word about "laws of Nature" in it, either of statement or allusion from beginning to end. On the other hand we find many (and nowhere else in Holy Scripture so many) statements and implications that God does all things by His immediate will. These things are not said with the inexact warmth and color of poetical excitement. Nor are they of those things in Holy Scripture (if there be any such) in which we might properly allow that the inspired man uttered the divine thought with some of the error of his prejudice. They are the clear and calm voices, first of the Son of God Himself, and then of His Apostles, to whom He committed most distinct and intellectual utterances of His Word.

In this case it was not even necessary to *anticipate* a thought which was not really to be known among men until after many unscientific centuries. This notion of *law in Nature* was already in the world. For more than three centuries it had been talked of by acute Pagan philosophers. What could we say, then, if such a great religious, or at least semi-

religious, truth had no recognition in the perfect Word of God?

The Christian era begins with most magnificent displays of the supernatural. These are told in the Gospels in the most simple and natural way. Other incidents which no one thinks miraculous are related with them, and all alike as done by the immediate will of God. It is not even always easy to distinguish in these glorious facts between what is natural and what is supernatural. Of such is the birth of St. John Baptist, which is foretold by a bright angel from God. When a similar message comes to the virgin mother of that altogether supernatural nativity of Our Lord, the Son of God, it is said even of John's birth, "With God nothing shall be impossible." The glories of Bethlehem are recounted in the most direct and simple way, as if they had no intellectual difficulties for real faith, and without any of the apologies and qualifications which those who believe in "laws of Nature" cannot dispense with in recounting the marvellous.

This great event was followed by about thirty years of the ordinary life of the world. The divine history interrupts this first with the preaching of St. John Baptist. It is remarkable that he reproves his countrymen for a conceited security in "the reign of law" (as that notion was obscurely in men's minds,) with these words: "Begin not to say in yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for *I say unto you that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham*" [St. Luke iii. 8].

Our Lord proceeded to His public ministry among men after a most sublime, mystical conflict with Satan,* in which twice occurs the occasion for Him to speak of “laws of Nature,” if there were any such. The first saying of the tempter is: “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Is His answer at all, or in substance, what even the most religious of our Christian men of science would say now? Would they not say that the will of God was in fixed “laws of Nature”; or at least allude to these? The Lord’s answer is, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” This, as I apprehend, tells us with the greatest plainness, that our physical life is entirely dependent upon the immediate will of the Blessed, Eternal One; and this, whatever further reference to our spiritual good we may suppose in the words.

The reply to the second temptation was another occasion to mention this truth of natural law, if a truth. The suggestion to venture upon a miracle of mere display is met, not by saying that it is impossible or even improper on account of a “law of Nature,” and as it would not in this case be done to attest the Word of God to men. It is refused simply because it is not the will of God.† Let us notice that this is not so much because *against* that blessed Will, as not being positively called for by it.

When this glorious Master of Wisdom goes to

* St. Matthew iv. St. Luke iv.

† St. Matthew iv. 7—“Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.”

teach mankind about their ordinary life, *e. g.* how they are to think about their food and clothing, He says nothing, even by most remote allusions, of this "reign of law." He speaks in such an unconsciousness of it, as would now make our man of science smile if he overheard such teaching. He said simply and directly that God "clothes the grass of the field," and feeds the birds, and, in the same way, "adds unto" us whatever we need for our bodily life. He enjoins upon us to imitate Him who "maketh the sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust." He teaches us to live without care or fear, because not a sparrow falls to the ground *without God*, and because the very hairs of our head are numbered by Him.

He teaches each soul of man to make this daily prayer, asking Our Father Who is in Heaven, "Give us this day our daily bread." (I would put these seven short words alone against all the ingenious philosophy that has reasoned of "natural law," the confident references to "a decree for the rain" and other such phrases of the Old Testament, and all the "painful" arguments used to persuade devout men that a "reign of law" does not forbid them to pray. The more those words are pondered, the more weighty they are in this question. Entangle your soul if you will in an intellectual demonstration that we men are but insignificant parts of a vast inexorable machine; but with every rising sun remember to pray, not, Give me all knowledge of these unvarying laws in obeying which all my

welfare consists ; but, "Give us this day our daily bread.")*

He speaks again and again of things which are impossible to men, while "all things are possible with God" [St. Matth. xix. 26.—St. Mark x. 27.—St. Luke xviii. 27]. He tells them how to *avail themselves* of that infinite power [St. Matth. xvii. 20, etc.]. He says that if they are children of God, and the fewest of them combine in asking anything of Him, "it shall be done for them" [St. Matth. xviii. 19, etc.]. He does *not* limit this to spiritual and so exclude physical things. He makes a tree wither before men's eyes, and uses that occasion to say, "If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder plain ; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you" [St. Matt. xvii. 20].

He Himself continually for three years "doeth great wonders." He heals incurable diseases. He replaces the utterly lost senses of men, and creates those senses in some who had never before possessed them. He restores others to life after they have died. He walks at night upon a raging sea amid a howling tempest, and by His words of command makes a great and sudden calm. He says of these miracles, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," describing the power of God in all things visible as being like His, acts of present Divine will [St. John v. 17]. Yet in none of these instances, nor at any other

* After this was written I was not surprised to read of some (orthodox but) scientific Christian teacher who contended that this petition of the Lord's Prayer should be disused by all who understand the "reign of law." It is an irresistible corollary of that notion.

time, does He talk of "forces" or "laws of Nature," or anything equivalent to them, nor make the most remote allusion to such things.

Let us challenge the reconsideration and honest judgment of all Christian men upon these facts. Could they reasonably believe in a "reign of law," if the Gospels were only silent about it? But yet more, is it credibly true when with so many occasions, and we may even say necessities for Our Lord Christ to speak of it to men if true, not a word of the sort can be found to set against the mighty sentences in which He shows us the present power of God in all events? And *who* is this "Word of God" in complete truth "without any mixture of error"? What is He beside being the Witness of the Divine? He is the very person who would have made the "laws of Nature" if there were any. He is the One who, (if there be any truth in that notion,) "subjected Himself" to this "reign of law," of which evidently He knows nothing!

After Our Lord ascends into Heaven, the New Testament continues with a history of the Acts of the Apostles. Nowhere in this have we a word of "natural law." One of these Apostles is evidently well acquainted with the Greek philosophy, which did already contain at least the suggestion of "laws of Nature" and the notion (in germ) of their "reign"; but he nowhere mentions it. Some later Christian writers (whose works are *not* Holy Scriptures, nor they any way as safe guides to truth as this Apostle,) treat this and other notions of Plato as profound

searchings into the truth of God, only less than inspired. We shall see later that St. Paul does speak generally of this "men's wisdom," but only to warn Christians against mixing it with their religious thought.

He did go to Athens itself, and "certain *philosophers* encountered him." That these at first were not Platonists, but "Epicureans and Stoics," does not alter the significance of this occasion. His great discourse at Athens was before an audience made up from all the curious and disputatious Athenians, among whom he might be sure were some Academics or scholars of Plato, as well as some Peripatetics or followers of Aristotle. He proceeds to speak of the One God, of Creation, and of all life and movement since. He gladly seizes upon the resemblance of one of their superstitions (of "the Unknown God") to the true religion, to teach that truth.

But does He say, "Some of your philosophers have had divine light given them to perceive by their studies how God, in Creation, set up unvarying laws of Nature; and unless He interposes in these in a very unusual way, all things proceed by their own force"? No; but he does say what is in effect the exact opposite; that "He giveth (not *gave*) to all life and breath and all things. . . . In Him we live and move and have our being" [Acts xvii. 25, 28]. Much the same in substance had he publicly said once before in a heathen city [Acts xiv. 15, 17]. Thus, in all the Acts of the Apostles, while we have many miracles

related without any suggestion that God then "suspended the laws of Nature," or the like; and while Providence and prayer are often mentioned without any allusion to a "reign of law"; we *have* the immediate power of God in all things set against those opposite notions which were already in the philosophy of men.

In the Epistles we have the truth of God given to us in the "scientific" form (as some would say), rather than the historical. Perhaps here, at last, we are to have a disclosure of the religious truth about "laws of Nature"? But no; it is not in the Epistles at all. They are (as we have observed in other parts of Holy Scripture,) thickly sown with occasions to speak of it, if true; as whenever the great Creation, or the good Providence, or mighty miracles, or gracious answers to men's prayers, are mentioned. Yet never was a more decisive "silence of Scripture."

Nor is this all. They say things plainly opposed to that notion. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights," etc. [St. James i. 17.] "It is the same God who worketh all in all" [1 Cor. xii. 6]. "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" [Phil. ii. 13]. "According to the good pleasure of His will" [Eph. i. 5]. "Who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will" [Eph. i. 11].

It is unfortunate that these last sentences have been commonly (but not properly) assumed to speak only of what the Almighty One does to *men*,

and in regard to their spiritual welfare ; and so have only been fought over in the great controversy about "free will." In so far as God is said to do all, while we are morally free, *a fortiori* (so much the more) are they true of all that is outside of a moral free-agency. It does not belong at all to this enquiry to treat of that great question. We may simply stand upon the truth, that if God has chosen to give independent action to free personal wills in some of His creatures, surely all others move and act only by *His immediate will*.

But the last of those passages needs more critical notice, on account of the strange misuse of it by the great Hooker in the very question before us.* He maintains that to say "the *counsel* of His will," implies that it was not absolute will, but that God had to consider some abstract "reason of things" or a sort of eternal "reign of law" which would certainly decide His choice. But let any one carefully study the word *Βουλή* of the original Greek, and he will find that no term could have been used to express *will* more absolutely. In classic Greek it is the word always employed to express *divine volition*. It is unfortunate that our excellent English version should have here rendered it "counsel." Not that it could not be justified by *many* parallel passages where this very term "counsel" cannot possibly mean anything but will (as, *e. g.*, Heb. vi. 17, "the *immutability* of His *counsel*"); showing the English word "counsel" may properly mean the secret

* Eccl. Pol., Book I.—See more fully of this *infra*.

purpose and decision of a will; but it has given a chance for the misconstruction mentioned above. The sentence would, therefore, read most correctly in English, "Who worketh all things according to the *wish* of His own *will*." It was meant for the most precise and energetic expression of such absolute will without any suggestion—rather with exact exclusion—of anything like consultation, reasoning or motive, and yet more of any *law* for the Eternal Lord. If my reader could need anything more to convince him, he will see it in the passage I cited just before this one. It is in the very same exhortation of St. Paul to his Ephesian converts, but a few verses before this, and evidently another noble expression of the same great truth: "According to the *good pleasure* of His *will*."

Nor would this study of the Epistles be complete without recalling attention to what St. Paul says in condemnation of "the wisdom of this world," etc., as compared with (or if mingled with) the knowledge of divine things which we get from the very Word of God. What he says of this at least includes, if it be not even specially intended for, such speculations of Plato, Aristotle, etc., as grew into the modern notions of "natural law" and its "reign." But we shall treat of this more fully under the title of the history of that theory. (See *infra* Chap. VIII.)

But there is a certain other saying of St. Paul's which, though I am not aware that it has ever before been so suggested, bears powerfully, and I think decisively, upon this enquiry. If there is any

writer who can be styled in a good sense "the Christian philosopher," he may be. God gave him a mind to see the deepest general relations of things, and, what is much more, inspired him to write His Word with incidental mention of such relations in absolute truth. We might apply in expostulation with many a Christian thinker, his very words, "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man"—who lovesthine own way in human metaphysics and bewilderest others! without a thought of what St. Paul and others "moved by the Holy Ghost" have, in the midst of the lessons of true religion, let fall by the way, about the "spirit, soul and body" of man. This has not been quite unnoticed; but he who shall yet give the time and labor necessary for a complete treatment of this, will do a great work toward clearing up the obscurities and errors of all philosophy.

Whether or not St. Paul had been instructed in his youth in the Greek and other philosophies rife in that age, (as some think) or not, he *had* been at Athens debating the high questions of religion with the scholars of Epicurus, Zeno, Plato, and Aristotle. It was after this that, "by inspiration of God," he wrote the perfect theory and argument of what was already in the faith of Christians, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. In this he adduces in illustration one of the very things which are certainly under the "reign of law," if there be any such thing. It was such a case that the favorite postulate of modern science, if true, could not fail to be mentioned; namely, the growth of a plant from its seed.

But what is St. Paul's account of this? "But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool! that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body which shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat or some other grain; but *God giveth it a body*, as it hath pleased Him; and to every seed his own body" [1 Cor. xv. 35-38].

It will be observed upon scrutiny that not only is "natural law" entirely (in lawyer's phrase) ignored, but that something else is affirmed, viz., that in each case of the growth of a plant from the seed, "God giveth it a body." Had the verb been "*gave*" there might be opportunity to argue that this meant some general gift of inherent power at the time of the Creation. The entire argument is against all unbelieving notions of impossibility in anything which God says He will do. The special illustration here is that just as, with an attention and action which has no possible weakness or weariness, He in all vegetable growth, by His mere will, makes a plant follow a seed, so will He give each of us a spiritual body in succession to this natural one which decays. In both cases alike, a kind of identity and a succession of life between the new thing and the old is expressly recognized. The words, "and to every seed his own body," confirm this; while the other phrase, "as it hath pleased Him," emphasizes it all as His immediate act. Only see how the notion of a "reign of law" must needs have expressed itself in a like case; thus,

beginning with the 37th verse, "And that which thou sowest, etc., but — *it receiveth a certain body according to an invariable law established in the Creation*"; or "*it receiveth a body developed by forces which were set in motion then and are never interfered with,*" (unless in express miracle, which was not all the case supposed by St. Paul); as Leibnitz actually says, "so that they are able of themselves to execute their functions."

The great Revelation of St. John, which closes the Book of God, has no notice of "natural law," while it contains various sublime declarations concerning the works of God which agree only with His incessant and immediate doing of all things. Its awful and glorious visions of the passing away of the present Creation, recognize no repeal of existing "laws of Nature," but they might well suggest to us the falsity of any notion of a "reign of law." This should remind us that there really is in these Holy Writings one mention, by way of prophecy, of this notion and of its natural effect upon faith. It is this: "There shall come in the last days scoffers saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation" [2 Peter iii. 3, 4].

It is true, and I have already many times recognized it as true, that many who are by no means scoffers, but are sincere Christian believers, maintain the opinion which I suppose to be intended, or at least included, in the terrible censure of this

sentence of Holy Writ. This application of the words is founded upon the general sense of all Holy Scripture. For this question, and for the best result of all this present study, we shall do well to look to such general sense. We must not be at all satisfied with some success in finding passages which seem to favor our preconceived opinions, or with ingeniously "reconciling" others that were not so much to our purpose. The comparison and verbal discussion of separate verses of Holy Scripture has its illusions, and its tendencies to deviation from the direct pursuit of truth. It is, therefore, most useful to turn from this at last, however needful in its place, and take a fair look at the general spirit and effect of the written Word of God, and more especially of the New Testament, as regards the matter in question. Let each of my readers then ask himself which of the opposing ideas before us agrees best with the whole tenor of the Book of God as we have now traversed it together; or, according to his own careful reading and recollection, if he has preferred another method.

We did begin that investigation in the order of *time*, and with the Old Testament. That order has its value. But now, in this review and general result, the other order is most reasonable. The Gospel of Our Lord is the complete truth of religion; His Church is the kingdom of God on earth that is to last till time shall be no more. And especially as the notion which is upon trial is supposed by its adherents to be the result of men's later intellectual activity, it will if true find recognition,

not in the dawn of God's Word in prophecy and poetry, but rather in that Divine light of clear intelligence which followed, and in which true discovery found its greatest impulse.

Now there are two general ideas of man's life, and his knowledge of what is around him, which we have to choose between. One is, that our best nature and aspiration is to regard this world and all in it, and all other worlds, as a vast and perfect machine, which only needs each of us to study and all to combine their results in collecting this knowledge, so as to learn about all its past and calculate all its future. The *tendency* of this idea is to persuade us that the present processes have had no real beginning and will have no end. And one of its corollaries is that man is an insignificant thing in all this vastness, and his *individual* life but a little floating bubble on the shoreless ocean.

The other and opposite idea is, that we know *first* of a great Person, immensely greater not only than we, but than all beside Himself, who has told us that many ages ago He made us and all this for His good pleasure, and especially in order that we of mankind might know and love Him; and that He will, we can never be sure how soon, make an end of "all things visible," and replace them with something better and more enduring, while spirits and persons (*i. e.* God, angels and mankind) will continue to exist: that this great change will be made (at least for one purpose) in order that we men may be raised out of a general degradation from the love of God and man, and un-

happiness, which has befallen our kind, and in which the Cosmos around us has a certain sympathy of disorder; that our chief concern of knowledge and hope is with this Divine and spiritual now, and that supernatural future; so that while we have cares and duties which must employ much of our time, and belong mainly to this life, and therefore some may well explore this universe and its usual order of cause and effect, and all may use this knowledge as it accumulates with the successive generations of men, this does not compare in urgency and value to us with the knowledge of God, and of how to regain our true life as He has given us that knowledge in a Gospel of mercy; to regain this partially now, and afterwards completely and forever.

Need I say that these two ideas of man's life are entirely opposed to one another; that one cannot occupy a mind without displacing the other? Need I say that the latter prevails through all the Holy Scriptures?* The other is I think in substance and essence, certainly in intellectual tendency, that of the "reign of law."

So the Holy Scriptures always speak of pride as one of the greatest mischiefs of mankind, and especially of the pride of knowledge acquired by our own observation and reasoning, as a weakness and danger; while the humility which would rather love truth as

*If any Christian believers call for specific citations in support of this beside their general reading and the combined effect of a thousand verses, I refer them to such passages as these: "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," [Rom. viii. 22.] "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal," [1 Cor. iv. 18.] Are these at all accordant with the other idea?

told us by our Superior, is both more honorable and more sure. Thus they command and commend simple faith in God's Word. On the other hand, all such science as is founded upon the assumption of a "reign of law," both promotes intellectual pride and makes religious faith more difficult. This tendency is well displayed in the remark often met with in modern books, that in proportion as ages or nations are ignorant of "natural law," they think whatever they do not understand to be Divine power; but that as they become enlightened, they refer all such things to some invariable but unknown "law."

Another such tendency is to assume that whatever high powers or valuable knowledge mankind have now, must have been reached by gradual intellectual improvement from the first ages, when man was in all respects a creature far inferior to his present "best estate." But Holy Writ without denying the low condition of all mankind, almost from the first, and especially of the great part of it which has been sitting in darkness of false religion, informs us that this is a fearful fall from the glorious "image of God" in which He created our first progenitors, to which we can only be gradually returning now by His mercy, and never completely in this life.

Another such contrast deserves the notice of thoughtful Christians. All the writings and speech of our age are full of the term "Nature," meaning the whole universe of what God has created, as if it had a personality, or at least unity of organization and force in itself. One who should try to dispense with

the term in this sense even for common conversation, would be astonished to find what difficulty and singularity of expression would be forced upon him. But the Holy Scriptures of God use no such term or any equivalent expression for the conception;* they tell us of "the creation of God" and of His "works," but they have not from beginning to end anything of "the works of Nature" or of its making or doing anything.

As the result of this study of the Word of God, it appears that the assumption of a "reign of law," which touches all the greatest questions of faith, has no recognition in the New Testament, nay, is quite expressly contradicted there. Is not this decisive? Nevertheless, if some sentences of the Old Testament are still alleged in behalf of that notion, we might proceed further to examine it throughout for all teaching which bears upon this matter. But if in this we have found the few alleged proofs to be bold figures of prophecy and poetry which by no means need mean what is claimed, while the whole tenor of Law and Prophets accords with the New Testament in teaching the present power and will of God in all things, then the proof of this is complete.

There may be Christian readers of this who are still so loath to surrender what they have long accepted as certain truth, that they will not allow this test of it by Holy Scripture, upon the plea that, as the "reign of law" was a great truth which God

*If any one question this by reference to any of the thirteen passages in which our English Bible gives the term "nature," he need but examine them to be convinced.

meant to disclose to men only by their discoveries and reflections, and ages after His Scripture was given them complete, so He would not anticipate it by any mention or reference therein. But they cannot so think without refusing to God's Word Written such faith and reverence as are due. For to say nothing of its being silent about something which men were yet to discover for themselves, and yet which cannot be separated from the greatest questions of religion, the express words of Holy Scripture must have tended to encourage men of earlier days in what this notion calls a false thought of God. Even now those words forbid me to believe in a "reign of law."

No; this is rather a most clear and powerful illustration of the value of fixed institutions of religion; fixed in words both of instruction and worship, which do not merely reflect the intellectual fashion of the passing age. Here is all our literature and the ordinary speech of men full of the false notion of "natural law," and tending to the universal acknowledgment of its despotic "reign." There stand the Holy Scriptures of God and, at least for the great and influential English-speaking nations, the words of Christian worship in their Common Prayer, however obsolete to the greater number in this country,* silent about this "Nature," but responding with approval to the humblest voice that recalls a despised

* Those of my readers who are disposed to agree with me so far in the main, but find this against their prepossessions, can easily enough pass it over. But I could not, in my purpose to "declare all the counsel" of this great truth, according to the observations and reflections of many years.

and forgotten truth. It is the eager and self-sufficient human present corrected by Divine truth out of the past. It is mankind intoxicated and led astray by intellectual vanity even far down in the Christian era, yet called back to truth and salvation by the mercy of God.

CHAPTER VIII.

HISTORY OF THE NOTION OF A "REIGN OF LAW."

WHEN we are making a faithful investigation of the truth and value of some opinion, nothing is better to clear the mind from disturbing prepossessions, than to study its *history*. This is especially so when the opinion in question has long prevailed and is strong in the authority of great men, both living and long dead. Such study leads us out of the fogs of prejudice and controversy, into clear air in which we see the actual objects of our thoughts. It shows us the first approaches and access to men's minds of the opinion in question: what then disposed them in its favor; what confirmed this and extended it to many other minds; what earlier and contrary belief may have once prevailed, and how that fared in collision with this; and what still maintains the one against the other. If the now prevailing opinion be true, it will grow strong by this enquiry; if false, we shall the better escape from its hold. Mr. Herbert Spencer has a glimpse of this when he says that enquiring into the pedigree of an idea is not a bad way of estimating its value. In a great matter like that before us, we need more than pedigree; we need a chronology — a real *history*.

The history of "the reign of law" as of some other dynasties, has its difficulties. It loses itself in the region of mere tradition, and even "myth."

Such notions, like other nebulous bodies, are often long in taking definite and final shape. Some of its patrons are certain that it came from Plato and Aristotle, or the ancient Greek philosophy in general effect.* Others are sure that it is entirely the product and crowning achievement of Modern Science.† Some even refer it to Holy Scripture; but this, as we have already seen, cannot be true.‡

Each of the other theories is right in a measure. Some notions and phrases of the Greek philosophers and their scholars gave a certain direction of this kind to the language and assumptions of Modern Science. No one can find in Plato what is now so confidently imputed to him. He left in writing so many curious speculations, without caring about their consistency, and in so entertaining a way, that entirely contrary opinions have been since his day sincerely and zealously maintained under authority of his name. The nearest approach to the "reign of law" in Plato is where, among other such things in the *Timæus*,§ he says: "The Creator Himself being the artificer of Divine natures, committed to His offspring (the inferior gods) the charge of producing those that are mortal"; and "after arranging these particulars, He retired to His accustomed state, and His sons obeyed their Father's order." Those who know Plato only by the unmeasured praises and even

* Hooker's *Eccles. Pol.* Book 1st—McCosh on Positivism, etc.

† Lewes' *Aristotle*; Fiske's *Outl. of Cosmical Philos.* I. 173, etc.

‡ See also a fuller discussion of *Eccles. Pol.* Bk. I. *infra* Chap. IX.

§ Cary's *Transl.* Bohn's Ed. ii. 380, 347. I quote this translation as being upon the whole as fair a rendering as can be given of this rather obscure passage.

worship of Mr. R. W. Emerson, or the only less extravagant admiration of some Christian writers, will be astonished at this gross polytheism; but their surprise will pass away as we proceed in this investigation.

In truth Plato, as also his master Socrates, was a pagan, though with some ideas of the Divine far above most of his countrymen. He was also a man of very uncommon quickness and strength of mind. He had travelled into far countries in search of wise men and of new ideas: certainly to Egypt, perhaps to Babylon and Persia. No doubt he had learned the doctrines of some of "the wise men of the East," who taught that there was but one God, but mixed this with various errors of religion. This was four hundred years before any of the New Testament was written, but long after the Old was complete. We have no certain knowledge that these holy books of those who were at least known to the inquisitive Greeks as the singular little nation of monotheists called Jews, had come into their hands. Very likely they had learned something of the religious ideas of the Jews as well as of the Hindoos from the Egyptians or Babylonians, and were not uninformed of the mono- (or duo-) theism of the Persians. And so from Israel rather than from their own deep thinking they really got what idea they had of One God and of His true character. And yet this was mixed with a vast deal of heathenish religion and false philosophy.

For all of old Israel lived in a far greater light of truth than the wisest Brahmin, Persian or Athenian

philosopher. What Abraham or Job knew by pure tradition from Adam, or by visions from Jehovah, and what of such truth the men of Judah and Jerusalem had besides in the Law and the Prophets, was as breaking day to moonless and almost starless midnight, compared with the highest thoughts in religion of all the heathen world.

It was a strange perversity in men to whom "oracles of God" were given, that some ambitious Jews while captives in heathen Babylon, began to study the false notions of that people, and of the Hindoos and Persians, and to mix these with their true knowledge of God. The beginning of "philosophy and vain deceit" among the Jews dates from that time, as shown in the "Cabbala" and "Talmud" and such writings. And so during the succeeding 600 years they imparted some ideas to the Greeks and copied some notions from them. The nations were all becoming mingled as never before by the wars of those times, and the subjection of all the others by the Romans. In the meantime Aristotle, who came just after Plato, and was more practical and consistent, though a less entertaining writer, had already made it a fashion of philosophy to talk about "Nature." This meant much the same as it does in common use in our day, *i. e.* all the world and life outside of us, as if it were a vast order which existed and lived and moved (at least as far as we knew or need think) of itself. So the very phrase "laws of Nature" begins to appear in the Latin poets.*

* Dugald Stewart, *Ment. Phil.* (Sir W. Hamilton's ed.) I. 158-162.

Yet there was no such distinct assertion of a "reign of law" as we have now. A God or gods were supposed to govern all things. There was a certain collection of writings extant then and already translated into Greek, which spoke in thousands of places of the One True God immediately doing all things.* We may now mention this, not adducing it here as decisive of the truth (though it is so), but simply as a fact of history showing that the idea of "the reign of God," the contrary of the other, was known to some men. But evidently by the time of Our Lord's advent, the more intellectual and ambitious Jews were far gone from this truth and faith of God, through their studies of Greek and Oriental philosophies. In religious opinion they were strongly and sternly Unitarian, abhorring the Greeks for their many gods. Yet in fact and spirit they neglected the true Word of the one God committed to them alone as a people, and "went a whoring after" vain inventions of pagans. It is a curious fact that in this the irreligious philosophy joins with the false religious superstition. Even Mr. G. H. Lewes, who scorns our faith, says† that the notion of forces acting of themselves in Nature came first from the *deification* of the great movements which men observed. It was thus with the Greeks, whose idea of religion for ages had been of a god for every great object or movement which they saw. So that even when Plato came to the conception of One Supreme, he still held to the many inferior deities, and assigned

* We found this out in the thorough investigation of Chap. VI.

†Lewes' Aristotle, p. 86.

to them what simply belongs to the *Only* Real and True. Indeed, thus only can we imagine how the true religion of primitive man had sunk into the grotesque and hideous idolatry of intellectual Greece and rational Rome, as well as of all the rest of the world, except little Israel. Even if we believe (as have some great Christian writers, both ancient and modern,) that this false worship is described by Holy Scriptures as in fact that of evil angels,* this deifying of "Nature" and its "forces" may still be thought the intellectual process by which men "departed from the living God" to these other religions.

With this agrees the only historical account which Holy Scripture gives of that dreadful degradation of mankind. For in the famous passage of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans which is so much misunderstood and misused, describing the process by which they thus "changed the truth of God into a lie," he says that "they worshipped and served† the *creation*‡ more than the Creator." Add to this that it describes them as those who "did not like to retain God in their knowledge" in the sense of penitence, humility, self-denying obedience and devout love. These might reject idolatry, wholly, as the Jewish scribes did, or partly as the Greek philosophers; but they also would see all real power in "Nature" or its "forces." Thus we already see the two false tendencies which obscure the true knowledge of God—from opposite directions, yet con-

*1 Cor. x. 20, 21.

† ἑλάτρευσαν, i. e. gave *latria* or divine homage, as in idolatry.

‡ Not "creature," as in the A. V.

verging and concurring to favor the notion of a "reign of law"; the one idolatrous and polytheistic, the other worldly and atheistic.

Perhaps there already appeared also a reinforcement of these tendencies, which has been very powerful in modern times, the (at least apparent) convenience of this notion for scientific research and generalizing. To an acute man like Aristotle, of pagan birth and education, who has set himself only to learn what he can of this world, it was very natural to personify "Nature," to say that "she" obeyed "laws" in all these motions: to imagine this really all the Divine that we really know of, and yet treat it as a vast and curious self-acting machine, which we are to study and understand by degrees. Not far removed from this was, and by almost irresistible transitions indeed proceeded, the atheism of some of the Greeks and Romans of that time, especially displayed in the elegant poem of Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*. Remember that all this was of "the wisdom of this world," when St. Paul wrote his famous sentences about that, without excepting any of it from his censure.

Then rose upon mankind a sun of spiritual light, in which even the illumination of Israel was but little to be distinguished from the "darkness" in which sat every other people in the world. The Word of God was present upon earth as a man. What He said as remembered and recorded; what He *did* for a complete redemption of "the whole world"; what His Apostles and other ministers said and wrote in

books of the New Testament, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; what that Third One of the adorable Trinity of God has said through the perpetual Church in all the ages since,—this is pure and complete light of truth in religion. We all know that this light was not to shine at once upon all mankind, but to follow a growth of extension by the Church, from one small tract of the world, until the earth should be *full* of this knowledge, or the Lord should consummate all by a second appearance among mankind as the universal sovereign.

But who (except as he sees the like done in our days) would suppose, that men upon whom this heavenly truth did shine, would wish to interpret or *improve* it by the writings of any groping pagan of a former age? A Christian might, *e. g.*, admire Plato's elegant language, the entertaining wit with which he leads his reader along through the most abstract reasoning, and even the flash of some great thought of goodness or of the Divine, which appeared in the midst of much superstition and other spiritual darkness. For this he might well adore Him who not only gave to Plato the glimpse, but to himself such light of day, for his ill use of which he meekly repented before God. He might humbly and lovingly pity those who did thus "feel after God" in the dark lands and days. But could he actually study the pagan writers as intellectual and spiritual masters in the knowledge of God's Word?

Some may say, that he must be very narrow-minded who would not learn the beautiful teachings

of Prof. Tyndall about light (physical) because he is so wrong in his notions of religion. Why then might not a wise Christian avail himself of whatever truth heathen philosophers had written? Ought he not to? Would not neglect to do it bring just reproach upon the true religion, and even be the cause that the more spiritual and intelligent pagans would never come to that light of the Gospel?

In answer to this we ought to consider first, that the Greek philosophy knew almost nothing of "science" in the modern sense. It rather held such knowledge in contempt. All that a man would learn by the study of Plato (beyond some idle or mischievous fancies) would be certain speculations upon the beginning and cause and continuance of all things—the nature of man's soul, its duty and destiny. These are essentially religious questions. They are answered truly, and as fully as we *can* comprehend them, by the Word of God. To construe that, or try to improve upon it by the groping guesses of a heathen man, brought up in idolatry and practising it in some measure all his life, and low in much of his actual moral conduct, could not but be irrational. When we know that he also in these fine speculations rather taught that matter was eternal, was only shaped and set in motion (not created) by the Supreme One, and had been always since kept in motion and controlled by a number of lower gods,—then surely this study of Plato by Christians could only "darken" the bright "counsel" of God by misleading "words" (of intellectual ambition) "without (real) knowledge."

And so it did in fact. The Lord had set up a *society* of all believers in Him which should endure as long as the world, and should proclaim His Gospel to every soul of mankind. Some men joined this society in the first ages who were not only acquainted with the philosophies, but began to try and state the faith of the Church in that language, or even according to those systems of thought. They may have fancied they were thus beautifying or adding to the truth of the Gospel. With some it may have been a fancy that this would bring honor to the Church, and draw other intellectual men into it. With others it may have been that they were unwilling to give up the flattering superiority over their fellow-men which knowledge of the "*σοφία*" (wisdom) or "*φιλοσοφία*" (love of wisdom), or "*γνῶσις*" (knowledge), of the Greeks or of the rationalizing Jews, seemed to imply.

One of the Apostles we have already had occasion to notice, was by previous study and experience, acquainted with this philosophy so as to observe its first appearance among Christians. We find that he spoke of it in writing his wise counsels to the Church at Corinth about twenty-five years after the Ascension of Our Lord (and also by inspiration inditing God's Word to all mankind). Remember that this epistle was written to Greeks in one of the richest and most ambitious cities of that land. It is true that a considerable part of that church was made up of Israelites engaged in trade at Corinth. St. Paul takes notice of some of their Jewish prejudices.

But none the less would they as well as the native Corinthians understand what he said of "*σοφία*" to mean the philosophies of Plato and others. If then he had meant to allow at all, much more to applaud (as some Christian writers do now), the use of this philosophy in religious thought, and only to guard against some possible misuse of it, he would (rather God who spoke His Word by him, would) have so said distinctly.

He was censuring divisions or parties among them caused by their mixing other notions with the pure Christian truth. I give the words [1 Cor. i., &c.] more precisely as they would have come to the minds of the Corinthians, than our excellent A. V. expresses it. "Christ sent me to proclaim the Gospel, not with philosophy of speech (*σοφία λόγου*), lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the speech (*λόγος*) of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the philosophy (*σοφία*) of the sages, and I will bring to nothing the intelligence of the intellectual. Where is the sage? Where is the writer? Where is the disputant of this world? Hath not God convicted of folly the philosophy of this world? For after that in the (true) wisdom of God the world by philosophy (its false wisdom) knew not God, God was graciously pleased by (what the world of philosophy fancied) the foolishness of the proclamation (of His Gospel) to save those believing it. While also the Jews demand a sign from heaven, and the

Greeks seek for philosophy, we proclaim Christ crucified—to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to the chosen ones, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (vs. 17-24). For you see the choice of you brethren, that not many wise (in a worldly sense), not many mighty, not many high-born are chosen. But God hath elected the foolish things of the world to put down the sages, and weak things of the world has God chosen to put to shame the strong. And low-born things of the world and things despised hath God chosen, etc. But from Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who has become to us (real) wisdom of God, etc. that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." (vs. 26-31.)

"And I, brethren, coming to you, came not with pre-eminence in manner of speaking or philosophy (*σοφία*) declaring unto you the testimony of God. And my familiar speech and my proclamation of the Gospel were not in persuasive words of human philosophy, but in manifestation of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not be in the philosophy of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we are speaking of (real) wisdom among the mature, yet not the philosophy (*σοφία*) of this age, nor of its masters who pass away. But we are speaking of wisdom of God hidden in mystery, which God ordained before the ages for our honor, which not one of the masters of this age knew; for had they known it they would not have crucified

the Lord of glory. . . . For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man which is in him: even so the things of God knoweth no one but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit (inspiration) of the world (*κοσμος*) (the world's spirit may know the world's things), but the spirit (inspiration) which is from God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God; which things we speak not in the words which man's philosophy teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural* man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them because they are only spiritually to be discerned (not by intellectual exertion, but by our souls obediently *receiving* knowledge of them *from God*). But he that is (in that way) spiritual judgeth all, but he himself is judged by no one. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we possess (by His gift of grace to us) the mind of Christ." (ii).

In quoting the entire passage so that my readers may form a just judgment of the writer's real meaning, I have only for the sake of brevity, omitted (at the places indicated . . .) a few sentences, which would rather have strengthened the effect of the whole as now given. But in order to bring out the verbal allusions and antitheses which

*That is, man fallen from the original image of God; (that is, perfect love of Him, which includes the spirit of perfect obedience), and with only his intellectual apprehension, however quick and bright that may be.

were plainly in St. Paul's mind, and to show precisely *what* he so strongly condemned, I have had with regret to change in a few places the excellent language of our English Bible, but not at all to another sense. The word *σοφία* occurring fourteen times in the Authorized Version as "wisdom," is the very favorite term used by the Greeks for their philosophy, which they claimed to be the only wise discourse about the Divine, and its works, and the duties of men. And so I render it when St. Paul speaks of men's pretended knowledge of Divine things. When it denotes God's Word to us about these things, I translate it as what it is, perfect "wisdom." So with *σοφοι*, meaning those who claimed to have gained this knowledge by their reason; I name them "philosophers" or "sages." The like method is used in the other variations from the words of our generally admirable authorized translation. Thus we get what St. Paul said just as he meant it for the Corinthians and as they understood him.

Observe then, first, that his condemnation of all this *σοφία* of men is without qualification, and without exception. He does not say, "Epicurus is bad, but Aristotle excellent: beware of the Stoics, but study the Academics (or Platonists)." He does not say, like some now, "take no notice of the superstitions of the philosophers, trifling mistakes which adhered to them from their less enlightened age; but admire and use their acute speculations upon the making and order of the world, upon the human soul

and its greatest good. Adjust these to the new doctrine of Christ, or rather, interpret it by them."

Evidently St. Paul thinks that they who have the full daylight of God's Word in Himself * its Gospel, would only bewilder themselves by the dim lanterns of the philosophers: that they cannot learn anything from such masters without entering the region of *religious* thought, and that following them there is to go away from truth and toward error in religion. And so men cannot know the things of God except as He directly reveals them. God had made such a revelation to these men of Corinth by him and his fellow Apostles and in the Old Testament. It would not only not add to this Divine knowledge for them to mix with it the philosophy of heathen men, or of any men, but this would obscure the heavenly light and mislead them. It would certainly promote that very self-sufficiency and vanity which it is the greatest interest and only true glory of men to rid themselves of, in glad devotion to the ever blessed God. "That according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."†

I do not know how this can be otherwise understood by candid Christians, unless they can show either, first, that *σοφία* was *not* the very term used and understood to represent the speculations of the "philosophers," or secondly, that Plato and Aristotle were entirely unknown to St. Paul or expressly excepted by him from his censure; or thirdly, that

* "The Word *was* God."— St. John i. 1.

† The same grand and generous truth recurs soon after in Chap. iii. 18-23.

there is nothing in their writings which touches questions of religion at all; or fourthly, that Christians following those philosophers were then, or in later ages, or are now, safe from the spiritual harm (for which no intellectual advantage could make amends) of falling thereby into a vainglorious self-conceit, which would cloud their faith and chill their love; or finally, which neither I nor those whom I address can properly suppose,—that they understand the real interest of God's truth better than he who wrote the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Some one, or really rather *all* of these things must be proved to allow of any Christian's following a notion of Plato or Aristotle in questions *any way* bearing upon our faith in or our understanding of God's Word.

But we have positive proof that St. Paul's mind had been turned before he wrote the words in question to this very error of the Greek philosophy: its claiming to tell how the Divine power made and moves the universe, and its suggestion of forces or laws of Nature. When he came to Corinth first, five or six years before the above letter was written, he came direct from Athens, but a day's journey distant, which might be called the city of the philosophers. While there only as a waiting traveller, "certain philosophers . . . encountered him," and from mere curiosity to know what "this babbler" would say—this barbarian with a new religion, as they would only regard an Oriental Jew,—drew him into a public discussion. In this he went at once into some of the

chief questions which all of these philosophers, and notably the famous Athenian Plato, had claimed to answer: *i. e.*, about the First Cause of all things, and how He maintains all that exists. Yet while ready to make use of any pleasing allusion (even to their false worship) which may incline these Athenians to receive the Divine truth he has to teach, he does not use or make any sort of allusion to Plato's philosophy. He does not put forth this philosophic notion of a "reign of law" claimed by some as one of Plato's great thoughts, and in a measure implied in his writings; though if it were true, he could in his actual argument hardly fail to do so. What he does say, as it seems to me, plainly forbids that notion. Thus: "God that made the world and all things therein . . . giveth* to all life and breath and all things . . . though He be not far from every one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being."†

But this, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, is not all that St. Paul had to say of the philosophy of his age. Four years after that was written, perceiving that he was drawing near the end of his "course," and "good fight" of the faith, he sent out several other letters to churches and persons. These epistles express all the matureness of his experience and thought, and have the special solemnity of a concern for those to whom he would speak for the last time. The man and the Apostle were anxious and careful for that pure truth of God which he

* "*Giveth*," not *gave*.

† See also Rom. xi; 1 Cor. viii. 6; Col. i. 16, 17; Rev. iv. 11.

might soon no longer defend among men. We may say this with truth of Paul, the good and great man, even though it were not, as it is, the chief fact, that in these epistles God speaks directly to mankind by inspiration. Thus did the Holy Ghost foresee, and provide in them such warnings as the Church would need in all ages.

One of these epistles is written to the church at Colosse, and in it is this sentence: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world and not of Christ."—[Col. ii. 8]. As the term "philosophy" was so well known to St. Paul, as describing to all who spoke or read Greek in that age, the writings of Plato, Aristotle, and other such speculators, he would surely use it in that sense. He already knew this philosophy well as hindering the Gospel, and had long before been anxious about this effect of it. So also the Spirit of God intending these holy writings for all the ages, would use the term in this its simple meaning. What is said by way of description of the philosophy, corresponds also with what the same writer wrote to the Corinthians. It is something which professes to improve by human thought, upon what God has directly spoken to men. It is "after the tradition (*i. e.* by the communication) of men," who, however ingenious and eloquent they may be about inferior matters, can only speak "vain deceits,"—perhaps deluding themselves as well as others when they profess to discover from the "elements of this world,"—from their weak conject-

ures and self-sufficient arguments, something about God and His ways.

After this censure of philosophy, St. Paul proceeds to tell the Colossean Christians how great and sufficient is the knowledge of spiritual things given us by the Word of God, and especially as Our Lord spoke in person and in all His life and His royal power now. Then he answers them, that neither need they regard what any of their visiting fellow-Christians might insist upon about strictly keeping the old law of Moses. It seems probable from this, that some such visitors had come to Colosse. And so he connects this with his warning against the Greek philosophy, as being indeed of the same real origin in the intellectual vanity of men. He describes them all alike, as "intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by their fleshly mind." [v. 18].

We read the same thought in his first Epistle to Timothy, written a year later, especially at the end of it, where he charges that bishop after his death to keep the Word of God safe from mixture with "oppositions of science, falsely so called." [1 Tim. vi. 18].

CHAPTER IX.

HISTORY — CONTINUED.

ABOUT a hundred years later, all the Apostles having long since died, we find some accepted writers among the Christians praising, and in part following, the Greek philosophers. The writings of Plato were the most used in this way, because he seemed to say some Christian things, (as *e. g.* of One Supreme God, to know whom was the greatest glory and felicity of man). His Christian admirers declared that Plato and the other philosophers were indeed at the best far from the light of God in the Gospel; knew nothing of a great part of that truth, and the rest of it but partially and doubtfully. But instead of following the counsel of St. Paul and using only the better knowledge of the Word of God, they persisted in an attempt to explain and improve upon this, by that which, if it had any value, was far inferior. Their best reason should have told them that this was not wise; but it was even more contrary to that Word of God.

The motives of even good men are often so complex that we can only guess at them. But we may fairly suppose that these Christian admirers of philosophy thought this the best way to resist those who argued out of the philosophers for false doctrine, or against all the Christian faith; and that they supposed they were "adorning the doctrine of God Our Saviour" with these so famous names. Some

(as Justin Martyr, excellent in many ways) had been "philosophers" before they were Christians, and retained some of their former admiration for Plato and some party spirit as his followers. Along with this perhaps were some remains of a vanity of reading and intelligence superior to that of their plainer fellow-Christians.

Fifty years later, Clement of Alexandria writes with even more admiration of the philosophers and devotion to them. This is a natural result of the first departure from Christian good sense and obedience mentioned above. It shows how any use of the mere speculations of ingenious men who lived and died in heathen darkness, along with the bright Divine light, could only obscure that light to us. To mingle such men's reasonings with the actual *Word of God*, and construe it by them, even with the most laborious effort to separate their heathen errors from their best sayings, could do it no possible good, and would lead Christians aside from the truth. Thus Clement of Alexandria in the next generation went astray in the same direction still farther than Justin Martyr. And so did Clement's pupil, the noble, brilliant and pious Origen, fall into yet worse errors than his master.* Still there were

* It is true that all these, Justin Martyr to begin with,—affirming truly that Our Lord is the source of all light,—declared that He must have revealed it in a measure to Socrates and Plato. This is true in the sense that they (and we) should acknowledge His goodness in all knowledge. But it is no reason why we should go to pagans to learn His truth or to interpret His Word Written. The humblest Christian laborer in Alexandria was more "taught of God" than Plato. But for all that, did Clement or Origen ever go to such a man to explain Holy Scripture? If Milner's Ch. History had no other merit (which is far from true), it deserves praise above any other within my knowledge for its plain words about this false philosophy.—[See Miln. Ch. Hist. I., Cent. II., chaps. 3 and 9, &c.]

at this very time some plain and wise pastors of the Church who protested against this folly and recalled the warnings of St. Paul.* But the others were the more skilful writers, and had in their favor with all the ambitious, even with many private persons who flattered themselves by agreeing with the famous,—the influence of intellectual vanity.

The wrong tendency upon the whole kept increasing. The Christian religion became more and more that of the majority, and especially that of the refined, the scholarly, and the ambitious. Were some of these true, humble, obedient believers? They were still beset by the temptation to mix their reading of the elegant pagan writers of Old Athens and Rome with the Christian doctrines. Nor were their studies outside of Christian writings confined to these. All the crowd of religious notions from India, Persia, Egypt, and the un-Christian Jews (whose Talmud and Mishna were the Hebrew philosophy), which had zealous teachers and cherished writings—all were eagerly studied. Their fancy and ambition was to make all these tributary to the pure truth of God, taught by His Church. The real effect was to obscure that truth to themselves and to those whom they taught.

Certainly surpassed by no other of these Christian writers was the great Augustine, whose personal efforts and influence then, and in every age since his powerful writings, have done so much for the Church. Yet even he promoted this error by his

* Among others Hippolytus, and later Epiphanius and Chrysostom.

ambitious study and extravagant praise of Plato. So also he speaks incidentally of "Nature" and its "laws." Yet in the same writings* we find plain statements of the immediate power of God in all things natural or supernatural, such as we might expect from his penetrating spiritual and devout mind.

Chrysostom, a Greek himself, and so understanding the danger better, cites the divine warning against vain philosophy without making any exception of Plato and Aristotle.† So also Jerome sets forth the plain teaching of God's Word, as to His incessant present power,—however in other places he may negligently use the opposite language of the philosophers.‡ These two living in the same age with Augustine, are scarcely inferior to him among the great Christian Doctors.

On the other hand when, as might often happen then as well as now, writers were Christians by profession who were not so in heart, they remained the same worldly, ambitious philosophers which they may have been before, and only attired their opinions as such in a sort of Christian language, and tried to pass them off for doctrines of the Church.

But not long after this all the ambition of scholars

*"Si Dei bonitas se rebus sustrahat, ad nihilum relabentur," x. (Mignet) 858. "If the goodness of God should withdraw itself from things they would fall back into nothing." "Dei potentia et Dei voluntas, Deus ipse est.—Ea est causa existentiae," i. 736. "The power of God and the will of God are God himself.—That is the cause of existence." "Semper operatur et semper quiescit," i. 868, ii. 1554. "He is always working and always resting."

†Such passages of St. Chrysostom are well known to readers of his sermons, but the means of exact reference are not at my hand as I write this.

‡On St. John v. 17.

and writers, as well as almost all the reading and knowledge of God's Written Word, perished with the Greek and Roman Empires when they were overthrown by barbarians. In the long period of intellectual darkness which ensued there were in effect no writers. Those were "Dark Ages" not only for the lack and disuse of books, even of "the Book of Books," but because Christian doctrine as taught by the pastors of the Church had become obscured and perverted by notions and ceremonies not according to the Blessed Gospel of Our Lord.

At the first revival of ambitious study after some four hundred years of such darkness, the eager students of Europe applied themselves to some Mohammedan writers, who having found in the conquered libraries of the East copies of Aristotle's books of philosophy, translated them and adapted them to their liking. These Saracen students were men of keen intellects. The only religion they knew was that false one of the Koran, which was compounded of parts of God's Word as given to the Israelites and to the Church, and of sayings of Mohammed in imitation of that, together with "blasphemous fables" of his invention. The followers of the Koran were by means of that divine truth contained in it, imbued, and, one might almost say, saturated with the thought of the One God as opposed to the many gods of Pagans, (and also alas! as this polytheism was in a measure held by the unfortunate Christians of those Dark Ages). From this great thought some of them seem to have ascended to its companion

truth, that God now and always *does all* things. Such was Al Gazel of Bagdad in the eleventh or twelfth centuries. His book, "Destruction of the Philosophers," rebukes the irreligious spirit of Plato, Aristotle and all their followers. What a rebuke to Christians now! careless of that truth, or utterly blind to it as they have it in such glorious light of the Divine Word!

Others of the Saracen scholars were not so wise. Their religion neither satisfied their intelligence nor checked their doubts, by the actual Divine power of Truth given from above, and so above men's reasonings. They followed the acute speculations of the Greek writer into a kind of theoretic atheism, (called pantheism in our day,) which, when charged with by their fellow Musselmen, they denied, but which in the writings of Averroes, Avicenna, etc., is much the same as that of Spinoza four or five hundred years later.*

* Sir William Hamilton seems to attribute to Averroes in his work against Al Gazel, (*Destructio Destructionis*) the same idea of immediate Divine power as was maintained by the latter. But I cannot understand his quotations in that sense, and take Averroes for a mere Aristotelian, —pantheist and atheist at that. Sir W. H. actually names Al Gazel as the *inventor* of this true idea of God's will and power!—seeming really to imagine that nobody had ever before dreamed of what he thought such a strange speculation. This is a strong instance of the blindness with which a great scholar and acute reasoner, because pre-occupied with some other notion, can overlook what is in "Holy Scripture and ancient authors" under his eyes. How far Al Gazel may have gone in denying human Free Will, (as Sir W. H. seems to charge him with doing,) upon what is called in later Metaphysics the theory of "Occasional Causes," is not so plain. It would be very natural for one who had no better religion. Yet I have never read in mere human writing a nobler expression of wisdom and truth about that, than what is quoted from him by one of his own religion, in a curious letter cited in the preliminary discourse of Sales' Koran, p. 120: "*Ut sapientissimus Sidi Abo Hamet Elgaceli, (i. e. Dominus Abu Hamed Al Ghazeli) affirmat (cujus spiritu Deus concedat gloriam! Amen!) sequentibus verbis: Ita abditum, et profundum, et abstrusum est intelligere punctum illud Liberi Arbitrii,—ut neque characteres ad scribendum neque ullæ rationes ad exprimendum sufficiant, et omnes quotquot de hac re locuti sunt hæserunt confusi in ripa tanti et tam spaciosi maris.*"

Christian students of these writings rejected their religious notions (as they distinguished these), with a real abhorrence. They used the books, they said, only to learn the logic and natural history of Aristotle, which they had not in the Greek original. They meant and labored with that logic to make a treasury and system of Christian doctrine. For this they collected and arranged under different heads, sentences out of all "the Fathers," that is, the accepted Christian writers of former times. As all of the Fathers down to Augustine's day, beside their general soundness and consent, had some errors and contradictions; and those later than he were more and more imbued with the growing false doctrines, the "schoolmen" argued with very skilful logic to make a consistent system of all this, and make it all appear to accord with Holy Scripture. This was "rationalism" instead of simple obedience to the Word of God. In the same way they appropriated from the Pagan and Mohammedan philosophers the unspiritual and mechanical idea of "Nature."

Before the Reformation, the genuine and original writings of the Greek philosophers began to be brought into Western Europe, and to be in the hands of studious men; for there were then beginning to be many such students besides monks. Plato's and Aristotle's books were regarded as a sort of Holy Scriptures of philosophy. Parties even were formed as between them. Some preferred the former in opposition to the monks, who knew the other best and admired him. But another reason why many inde-

pendent thinkers preferred to be Platonists was, that Plato's speculations are more in the direction of religion, and seemed to promise them more freedom, at least in thought, from the hard and arbitrary and minute system of dogma which then passed for the Christian faith.

The general insurrection of men's intelligence against this irrational authority in philosophy of mere tradition, gained force sooner than the return to Apostolic and Catholic truth of religion. Each of these contributed much to the force and success of the other at the time. But, of course in this alliance the latter tended to go beyond truth in the dangerous direction of intellectual vanity. Books were multiplied by new writings and by printing. Students and inventors swarmed in all the countries of Western Europe. "Philosophy" began to consist, not merely of arguments about how this great universe came to be, or how we think or know anything, but of the wonderful things we know by our senses; about animals, plants and stars; life, disease, and all that makes up our present "natural sciences." The misty talk of Plato about "eternal ideas," or "the soul of the world"; or of Aristotle about "Nature" as some vast thing existing in a sort independent of God, (though nominally subject to Him, and possibly liable sometimes to be interfered with by Him,) was easily adjusted to their studies. Unless then the students were very careful to be humble and devout Christians, their studies tended away from religion and toward presumption and unbelief.

Some of the modern philosophers were men of most powerful minds, as the Pole Copernicus, the Italian Galileo, the great Englishman Bacon, and the great Frenchman Des Cartes. These are but a few of many such students in those days, some others perhaps equal to those mentioned; all striving to extend the knowledge of the sensible universe, and to invent new contrivances for the use of men. Such "men of science" have been continued in succession since, to our day.

It early became the general fashion with these to speak of "Nature," and of what they discovered as "laws of Nature." It was convenient for such investigation. Many of the most famous of them were devout Christians, who had no thought of making difficulties for our faith, or of placing their greatest discoveries upon any equal ground with God's Word. For others it had this further convenience, that it saved them from speaking or thinking of the Great God; so that *all* their thoughts might be only busy with their ambitious studies. The Church theologians and all Christian pastors were too much engaged in their controversies of doctrine to notice this then (or since). Even when it was displayed in some quarters as open unbelief of God's Word, they did not seem to perceive this notion of "laws of Nature" at its root.

Yet some great voices have been raised against it even among the chief philosophers. Bacon, whose merit and authority among them is excelled by no other, if it do not excel all others, is rightly one of

our witnesses; for while he also speaks of "laws of Nature," it is never with the notion which is now current, of an automatic mechanism. All such expressions as used by him are not those cold theories, but rather of the inimitably rich and beautiful imagery in which he clothes dry abstractions without obscuring them. On the other hand he expressly rejects the authority of Plato* or Aristotle. But still more, he begins his wonderful opening to the human mind of the vast future of discovery, with the declaration of a humble and adoring faith in the Word of God, as altogether more valuable and more certain than all that man can discover. He affirms the innocence and value of science *if*, and only if, we keep within religion, and warns us against attempting to change or construe the latter by the former. "For if any man shall think, &c. Therefore attend His Will as *Himself speaketh it*," &c.† Using the figure of two books, one of Holy Scripture, the other of Nature: "for that latter will certify us that nothing which the first teacheth is impossible."‡ Whoever will reflect upon these words will see they mean the exact reverse of what is the present scientific fashion under the "reign of law," and even of the Christian men of science. So that we really have the authority of "the Prince of Philosophers," whose suggestions were so wise that we might almost say that all modern science has come from them, for our proposition, that the notion of a "reign

* Calls him a *sophist*.

† Vol. I. 217, 218, Interp. of Nature.

‡ Ibid. p. 221.

of law," with its necessary corollary that the Word of God is subject to interpretation by men's discoveries, is an untruth and a folly.

Des Cartes was not so sagacious as Bacon in the direction of physical science, so he has had far less influence with its votaries since. His studies were more metaphysical and in the region of the spiritual facts. But he too, like Bacon, being enlightened by a devout Christian faith, escaped the irreligious mistakes common in such studies if pursued with mere pride of intellect. Breaking from the fetters of Greek philosophy, as well as of the technical logic of the Middle Ages, he reflected upon the *soul* of man, and the creation of it and of all else, in the white light of God's Word rather as this reached him generally and implicitly in the Church, than as in the very Holy Scriptures. In this luminous wisdom of faith he saw that what we are apt to call causes and forces are only links in the chain of effects: that there can be no real cause or force but in a Will. Man has such a will, very limited and weak in force. God has the Almighty and all-including Will. Thus he refuted this false idea of mechanical "Nature"; showing that we do know that God created all, and does personally and immediately and incessantly create and move all things; and that any "second causes" or continued "forces of Nature" imagined by us to be necessary to God in His works, are the mere fictions of our weak intelligence in the attempt to comprehend Him, the Unlimited, by our limited nature.

This is the essential and primary idea of true religion living in the Church of God. It accords with the devout faith of all Christians, whether their thoughts have ever travelled so far or not, and even if they think they believe those false notions of "natural law," etc. This is the simple meaning of the whole Book of God. It no way hinders the increase of knowledge to men. They behold the Infinite One doing all things usually with a sublime regularity, upon which they can employ their forethought and make their studies. In presence of this truth all intellectual difficulties about faith, miracles and prayer, vanish.

If we compare Des Cartes and Bacon, we see that there is no contradiction between them as regards this matter. It did not fall within the range which the latter set for himself to treat of the real Force in the created universe, but only of the *phenomena* which we observe. Thus his contending for "second causes" and speaking of "laws of Nature," had ill consequences not intended by him in his less religious successors. The other did turn his thoughts to the One Force, and rose with the strong wing of an "eagle soaring in the sun." But with most of his countrymen his knowledge of Christian truth came only from teachings of a Church not yet reformed from the errors of the dark times, and which, unlike that of England, did not teach its members to study that truth for themselves in the Holy Scriptures. So he did not seek and prove the true doctrine of God's Will as the one Force, as a religious but as a philo-

sophical fact; not, as we should, chiefly by the *Word of God*, but only by ingenious reasonings from the mind of man. In this "false position" of the controversy, his arguments, though superior and really unanswerable, were not as efficient with scientific men as those with which others contended for "second causes" and "laws of Nature"; the more so, since some physical theories of Des Cartes were refuted by the researches of Newton and others.

It is a great mistake of late writers of no small pretensions, and is a great wrong done to Des Cartes, to associate his name with those of modern skeptics in religion, and even say that he is the father of this unbelief.* He said truly of all human science, and especially of the metaphysical, with which he was most occupied, that the beginning of all true knowledge was *to doubt*. His writings and his life all imply that as regards knowledge from God in His Word and Church, the beginning and the end is to *believe*. This is as regards both kinds of knowledge; the exact opposite of modern doubt, which could therefore be ascribed to Des Cartes only by great ignorance or effrontery.

On the contrary, his great intellectual demonstration of the "Reign of God" was so much too religious

*Even one so respectable as Christlieb, and from whom we might expect real research and accurate statements, says ("Mod. Doubt and Christ. Belief," p. 5): "Such thinkers as Des Cartes, Spinoza, etc., etc., proceeded with more or less temerity to unsettle all traditional religious convictions," &c. The writer must have taken this at second hand from some of his Spinozist countrymen. It suits well enough their spiritual stupidity and their purposes, to drag one of the noblest Christian thinkers into the company of unbelievers; but not a champion of faith. Perhaps he took it direct from Kuno Fischer, who is cited in the *New Am. Cycl.* as authority for the same monstrous assertion. Are our books of reference and facts to be made up in that way?

for the men of science of succeeding times, that even his high renown scarcely saved it from utter oblivion. How many know of it now? or of those few, how many regard it with any interest, or otherwise than as one of the absurd theories of a barren speculation? When his countryman Malebranche, a very acute and profound thinker, repeated it a half century later,* it was neglected and forgotten in the same way.

Yet at this very time a Jewish atheist, Spinoza, professed to assume the ideas of Des Cartes and pursue them to further necessary conclusions. These results of much perverse ingenuity of argument were, that there is no God except that Universe, which Des Cartes had shown to be, not only once created by the mere will of God (who alone and eternally existed before it), but as also only existing since and now by His incessant Will. Could untruth go further than to assert, that he who had most clearly reasoned of God as the sole personal self-existent and *incessant* Creator of all things, was the author of the notion that there was no such Person at all! but that He (or rather *it*) was only what it had created! This last notion is the so-called "Pantheism" of Spinoza, which the atheistic Jews and some atheists of Christian birth declare to be the flower and consummation of human reason!†

* Yet he too without that primary reference to Holy Scripture and proof thereby which would have made it most clear and strong, and saved it from oblivion now as a doubtful speculation.

† It is an instance of the mock virtue called "charity" in our age, to avoid simple truth because it is not pleasant to some persons. To "call names" in the sense of epithets meant to be spiteful and wounding, is foolish and wicked. To call things and persons by their right

This horrid travesty of spiritual religion, if not the real result of the notion of a "Reign of Law," is certainly far more in accord with it than the Christian ideas. Yet, while it could not displace those ideas upheld by the Church and Word of God from the general belief of Christendom, this notion of Law prevailed more and more in all modern science. It overflowed out into literature, and indeed we have long had among our English classics a poetical treatise upon it in Pope's *Essay on Man*. It penetrated theology, and formed natural alliances on the one side with those hard "systems" of doctrine which have a great affinity for its dry, cold, unspiritual, unmystical and unloving temper,—and, on the other, with the "natural religion" and "natural theology" which strove to give the least possible offence to philosophic unbelievers, by being as little Christian as possible.

But to notice this succeeding history somewhat in detail, let us begin with the authority of a man, the weight of whose name in favor of the erroneous notion of "Law" cannot be disregarded wherever the English language is read. I mean Richard Hooker in his first Book of "*Ecclesiastical Polity*." This is the more noteworthy as it includes an attempt to prove this notion as a matter of religion and

names is a duty to God and to our fellow-men, which we must not evade for the flattery of being called "liberal" and "large-minded." Thus while I may not deny the harmless life of Spinoza, and am even touched by the story of his studious poverty, yet I call him an atheist because it is true. And to aid in blinding any one who is tempted to take up with such doctrinal notions for religion, would be a great wrong to such a person, and a more cruel crime than all the hard sayings that have been written of Spinoza. This is just as true as if Schleiermacher had not written his insane rhapsody of praise to Baruch Spinoza.

from God's Word. Upon examination we shall be able to account for so strange a persuasion of this great man, and to see that it need no way disturb our judgment of the truth upon its real grounds.

The "Ecclesiastical Polity" is allowed on all hands to be a work of remarkable sagacity and eloquence; profound and serious in thought, and animated as with a soul by devout and reverent love. This has made it one of the classics of the English language, even with those who do not accept its conclusions. The first book receives this universal praise the more because it does *not* pass upon the disputed questions. In fact, it is only an eloquent prologue to the real argument, and not essential to it. The author setting out in this way to magnify "law," readily adopts the vague and false notion of Greek philosophy* about this, as some "eternal idea" which God Himself obeys in Creation and in "Nature." It is an irrational guess from our nature to God's Will and Works, such as Hooker himself wisely deprecates,†—and then follows.

But then, like a good English Christian, he will say nothing of God for which he may not at least *think* he finds something in God's Word. (The true method indeed is to *begin* with that, and only think and say what we have first found there.) We have seen in Chaps. VI. and VII., that nothing in Holy Scripture can be connected with this notion of

* He indirectly discloses this source of the notion when he begins his account of it: "The wise and learned among the Heathen," etc.—Sec. 2, vol. 1, p. 73.

† See the passage of Sec. 2, beginning, "Dangerous it were," &c., quoted at length *infra*.

"Law," except by a slight verbal resemblance in some figurative expressions. On the other hand, the opposite truth is plainly and powerfully declared in a thousand places. Compare Hooker's own statement: "All things (in which he expressly includes God Himself) do work after a sort according to law," &c., with what he cites for it, the mystical account of Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, even before His works of old was I set up."

But in another quotation he makes an argument upon a plain mistake of the meaning of the original, which in fact declares to us the opposing truth, that, at least so far as we men are to know or imagine, the ultimate reason for everything is, the loving Will of God. He says, "They err, therefore, who think that of the will of God to do this or that, there is no reason beside His Will. Many times no reason known to us; but that there is no reason thereof, I judge it most unreasonable to imagine, inasmuch as He worketh all things *κατὰ τὴν Βουλὴν τοῦ θελήματος αὐτοῦ*—not only according to His own will, but "the counsel of His own will. (Eph. i. 11.) And whatsoever is done with counsel or wise resolution, hath of necessity some reason why it should be done," etc.

I need only refer my readers back to the notice of this very passage in Holy Scripture (see Chap. VII.), as we have already observed its meaning. In such use, *Βουλή* does not suppose consultation or reasoning, but mere will.* That sentence would

* See all dictionaries of classic Greek.

most correctly read in English, "Who worketh all things according to the wish of His own will."* It is in fact a most distinct and sublime declaration, that the Eternal One, Who is Love, does all things immediately and is under no imaginable "law." To say, "Nor is the freedom of the will of God any whit abated, let, or hindered by means of this, because the imposition of this law upon Himself is His own free and voluntary act," does not help the matter at all, and is only a variation of the same presumptuous fiction. Indeed, this eloquent rhapsody of Hooker's first book has passed for wisdom more upon the beauty of its concluding sentence, "Of law there can be no less acknowledged," etc., than that the argument was convincing or even intelligible.† Against this let us set another sentence of his, which is both very beautiful and wise: (If he himself had followed its counsel, he would not have reasoned about a reason or law above God. For let us not forget that there is a profound difference between the ideas of the Will of God being the absolute and supreme law, and the Will of God being always according to law.) "Dangerous it were for the feeble brain of man to wade far into the doings of the Most High, whom although to know be life, and joy to make mention of His name, yet our soundest knowledge is to know that we know Him not as He is, neither can know

* There is a fine suggestion of this in the very title of the legislature of the present kingdom of Greece—the "*Boulé*," or *Nation's Will*.

† Dugald Stewart remarks upon the like eloquent nonsense in the first book of the *Esprit des Loix* of Montesquieu, which talks in the same way of "law," and has thus passed for the best part of a work of which it is in fact the only unmeaning and worthless part.

Him ; and our safest eloquence concerning Him is our silence, when we confess without confession that His glory is inexplicable, His greatness above our capacity and reach. He is above, and we upon earth : therefore it behoveth our words to be wary and few."*

After Malebranche, however, we hear no more among students or writers of this as a religious question. The fashion of literary as well as of scientific thought was only to speak of "Nature" and its "laws" as a self-acting mechanism. Even the pious Sir Isaac Newton uses that language, yet with a reverent caution which by no means insists upon a "*reign of law.*" His contemporary, Leibnitz, whom some of the Germans think the greater philosopher, was less wise. He quotes the language of Des Cartes and his followers in maintaining the immediate Will of God as the only force, saying that they convert the universe into a perpetual miracle. He says,† "You degrade the Divinity ; you make him act like a watchmaker, who having constructed a timepiece, would still be obliged himself to turn the hands, to make it mark the hours. A skilful mechanist would so frame his clock that it would go for a certain period without assistance or interposition."

The German philosopher is entirely unconscious that it is he who would "degrade the Divinity," by making of His every way infinite power and most blessed will, a mere question between skilful or unskilful mechanism. That which is so gloriously plain to

* Eccl. Pol. Book I. sec. 2. (i. p. 72).

† As quoted by Sir William Hamilton.

"the spiritual man" in the true thought of God, was not "discerned" by this worldly "natural" philosopher.

Confining our attention now rather to the English people of this and the succeeding age, we find the intellectual temper merely intellectual, unspiritual and worldly. Even the best divines show this in their writings. They are so anxious to be rational, that they suppress any earnestness of faith or fervor of love of God. They deal in abstract terms, and personify them in a cold, colorless, and lifeless way, instead of speaking of the real things and persons of their religion. Never until the last two hundred years did men read or hear about "Christianity." Now, all our religious books are full of it. What is "Christianity"? The word is not in Holy Scripture. It is not in any of the treasures of godly wisdom and love which have come to us from the great ages of faith. It is not in any liturgy, confession, ritual, or book of devotion, or evangelical counsel which dates back of this affected and timid age. It did not need to be at last invented to describe that truth of God which had been known for one thousand six hundred years, and which had its own divine words from the first. It is an empty, chilly word, behind which any error can lurk, and any spiritual cowardice skulk in the hour of battle and danger.

With it belong the unmeaning distinctions of "Deism" and "Theism," the shadowy, indefinable and treacherous fictions of a "Natural Theology" and "Natural Religion," and the multitude of other cold

and weak abstractions which in our religious language we have substituted for the strong, honest, fact-words of our ancestors of three hundred years ago. All this accords with the mechanical idea of Nature.

Thus passed the eighteenth century, with Hume and others perplexing believers with adroit difficulties of belief founded in great measure upon this very false notion of "laws of Nature"; and Christian writers making ingenious replies, which yet failed of the force they should have had, because they too allowed the false idea. Even the great Bishop Butler suggests, though he does not assert it, and somewhat weakens his great argument of "Analogy" by diluting it with "Natural Religion."*

Much in the same way has the nineteenth century so far proceeded. There is from other causes more earnestness and fervor in many Christian writings, but the false notion of a mechanical Nature appears in almost all of them more positively and frequently. It pervades all reading as never before. We inherit in "modern thought" a curious compound of Christian ideas (or terms), those of the French infidels of a century ago, of the German rationalists of all shades and shapes, and of the inventions and self-sufficiency of the most restless mechanical and money-loving age of men.

It is true (and thanks be to God for this!) that formerly (and it is so still in some measure) this held good rather of the world of books and of

* If the author of the "Reign of Law" had understood Butler better, and imitated his masterly caution in asserting nothing positively which he did not know, he would have done much better.

writers, than of Christian men and women at large. Alongside of this literary and scientific world existed the great Divine society of Christians, including some of the before-mentioned persons, but more of others: a society with its own books in all people's hands, and in which the HOLY GHOST "dwells." The Church was indeed affected by the degrading intellectual influences, but was not subjugated by them. Thousands upon thousands lived and died within it who were often thinking of God immediately doing everything about them. All its true members "implicitly" believe this, even though thinking and talking of "laws of Nature."

Thus there have not been wanting within the Church through all this time, very spiritual and eloquent men who have spoken the great truth.* Yet this seems not at all known to our latest Christian writers. If known at all, it must seem to them as some sublime mystical nonsense, and not what it is, the truth of God, and the sufficient answer to all the objections to faith in Him which are built upon the false notion of a "reign of law."

We should be thankful to Our gracious Lord that this error, most dangerous when disguised in other forms of speech or diluted by qualifying phrases, is at last presented to us in a book with that very title. It is but another instance of its subtlety, its prevalence, and its irresistible tendency, that this book is an honest attempt to defend faith against its assail-

*Leighton, Fenelon and many others. It has been the author's purpose to collect in an Appendix, or otherwise publish a collection of such citations. But this must be omitted, or at least postponed for the present.

ants. That the book receives much favor, and no criticism as regards its essential and fatal error, is a symptom of the same which cannot be mistaken. The cold and deadly despotism of mere unspiritual science over Christians could not be more plainly shown, than by the fact that such a title of a Christian book should produce no other sensation than gratification, that a Scottish nobleman would volunteer to defend our faith, and a persuasion that we are all bound to accept and commend his arguments.

The title of this book is indeed a more important thing than its contents. Some things in it are very well said, if it were not for the substance and effect of the whole. But it is not at all a mere question of words about that title. The arguments may fail to convince, or may be forgotten. But the mention of the book recalls the false idea with a sort of authority. And this *idea* is the mischief. To have a true "knowledge of God," we must get rid of every notion of any other dominion than His. "Under which king?" is the question to be answered.

A "Reign of Law" is the same in substance as making "Nature" a (not to say *the*) God. Law is not God. The true thought of the One Eternal Person is obscured by such phrases. It is our unhappy, perverse self-degradation, which "hearing the voice of the Lord God," seeks to hide itself from Him "among the trees of the garden." No, it is *He* "with whom we have to do." We cannot love "law"; but the supreme need and law of man is to

love God. Any word or notion that sets up to reign over all things seeks His power, no matter how well words are marshalled to declare that by this we mean to maintain true religion.

The zealous Christian champions who concede the false notion, cannot exorcise it of the demon of unbelief. The mischief grows with the advance of natural science. One of the most eloquent and earnest of those entangled in the net of this wrong concession, has to admit that "modern natural science as a rule" is atheistic, in this very way. He says: "It talks so much about the laws, that at the present time, the latter in the view of numberless laymen are becoming independent divinities, each absolute lord in its own special domain, and repudiating all interference from God Himself. The old heathen personified the forces of Nature, and made them demi-gods: *we do the same and call them laws.* The heathen, however, were rational enough to place these individual lesser gods in subjection to the Most High, while we invest our 'laws of Nature' with sovereign power, in whose august presence the very hands of God Himself are tied and bound. In our time therefore, *natural science has become the main support of the separation made by Deism between God and the world.*" *

* Christlieb, *Mod. Doubt and Christian Belief*, p. 198. The last italics are that author's.

CHAPTER X.

AS TOUCHING THE FREE WILL OF MAN.

HAVING, as is the proper order of this investigation, looked for knowledge first in God's Word, and then traced the history of human opinion, we may now wisely study it by our reason in some other aspects. One such most useful study will be its relation to the free-will of man. Many shallow and some deep thinkers drop their plummets into the great abyss of the conjunction of the human with the Absolute will, and then come to us to report the exact measurements. I make no such attempt. I believe it a mystery immeasurable by human speech, and unfathomable by human thought. Yet none the less do we all know that this responsible will of ours is free, and yet that the Infinite Divine Will always prevails.

But this repose in the mystery by faith and reason is invaded by a gratuitous perplexity, if we entertain the notion of a "reign of law." We know as a transcendant fact that there is an immense distance between us and "the Blessed and Only Potentate"; and so we can calmly believe in His Supreme Will, beside our conscious freedom. But why this other "reign" ("whereas the Lord was your king,") which, as we shall now see, *must* contradict our freedom?

The essential idea of this "reign of law" is that

from the beginning (if it allows of any beginning), and until the end of the world (if it allows of any end), all things exist and move according to certain "laws" or forces: that what seems irregular is only our ignorance of its "law": that all moves with such precision and harmony of its innumerable parts, that any one who knew all these laws could calculate exactly what would happen; as *e. g.* what the weather would be in Oakland, Md., upon the summit of the Alleghanies, a thousand years from this day; or how many gallons of water would flow past that place that day in the Little Youghiogeny River; or how many wild pigeons would collect in the forest near by, at the same time,—calculate all this as correctly as they now do the eclipses. To this all except the infidels add, that when God made this great machine, He reserved the power of interfering in it with some few miracles for the spiritual good of man.

Now it can be made plain that, even if there were no essential contradiction of this notion in an interfering Divine Will, if any *other* will interfered it would soon destroy the "reign of law."* The uniform action and the very existence of the machine (as a machine) would, in time, by mechanical necessity cease. Its vastness and power compared with the apparent insignificance of the interference, would

*In one aspect even more so than the Divine, since of that it might be said, though erroneously, that the "interferences" were but a part of the vast mechanism as much provided for in the working as the rest; whereas the will of a wayward creature, *not* of accord by perfect knowledge and love with the Supreme Will,—only partly so even with those at all restored to it,—must certainly disturb the exact movement.

not prevent this. The more prodigious its extent and complication, the more certain and terrific its ruin. The nicer its adjustments the more fatal the foreign substance intervening; as a few grains of sand dropped between some of the polished surfaces of the Strasburg clock would in time destroy its movement. Nothing must be allowed to be or to move in all this mechanism of "Nature" except by the unviolated "reign of law." Every mote of dust has its place or changes its place; every current of air rushes from the opening door of a house, as a part of this inexorable adjustment. If we could imagine some wilful being that knew (or cared) nothing of the coming mischief, approaching to look at this great machine, and then for any purpose or fancy disturbing its movements, we would know that the ruin of the whole construction was only a question of time.*

Now this earth swarms with just such *will-full* creatures who displace motes and fluids and liquids and solid masses incessantly, without ever thinking that they are in the midst of such a delicate machine and are disturbing its normal action. The amount of interference by mankind in every moment of time with what would otherwise be the movement of the "laws of Nature" is beyond our calculation. If men have free will, this action of theirs is not reducible to the mechanism of any such "laws" known or un-

* It would not have the chance of repairs and readjustment which pertains to human machines; for it is the very theory of "the reign of law," even in the most religious view, that the Maker "interferes" only by *miracles* for spiritual purposes; all else is unvarying "law" from beginning to end.

known. It does not meet this argument at all to say, that in all which men do, they only avail themselves of the laws which are still working invariably. The important fact is that processes and results *are* changed. Not only will clouds and rains be different from what would have been "Nature" if men had not felled so many forests and turned them into fields, but every time a child throws a handful of dust into the air, what would have otherwise been the poise and movement of all matter is changed and can never again be the same. In nothing do all the admirers of a mechanical Nature more exult than in this supposed perfection and unbroken march of quantities and forces.

There is, of course, only one way to save the mechanism of law from this destructive argument, and that is to make what seems human free will a part of the machinery. No one now who believes in the true God likes to deny the freedom which He has given to man. Thus, in the book called "The Reign of Law," we have one who is indignant and argumentative against the deniers of man's liberty, and who yet, because his favorite notion requires it, crowds the supposed "free will" into his remorseless machine, adjusts it by certain wheels and bearings of his imagining and to his own satisfaction, and that assures us with a gratified and gracious smile that, "when we pass from the phenomena of Matter to the phenomena of Mind, we do not pass from under the Reign of Law. Here too facts do range themselves in an observed order; here too there is a

chain of cause and effect running throughout all events," &c. (R. of L. p. 274.)

This is, in substance, saying that, while we think, (really we know,) that we are acting by our choice; so that we stand or move, "do good or do evil," serve or disobey God as we will, in which case alone would He judge us; this is only in seeming: really all our acts and feelings are links in "a chain of cause and effect"—parts of the resistless machine called "Reign of Law."

This is followed by a long dissertation upon "motives," &c., in that method of a certain school of theology, which has been humorously and vigorously described by a theological adversary as being in effect,—

"You can and you can't:
You shall and you shan't:
You will and you won't:

You'll be damned if you do, and you'll be damned if you don't."

It does contain the admission that "among the motives that act upon the mind, Man has a selecting power. He can, as it were, stand out from among them, look down from above them, compare them among each other, and bring them to the test of conscience." If this means real free-will it is well. But then "the chain of causes and effects" disappears, and the "reign of law" over men's choices and acts, such as had been claimed, is abrogated. Yet, as the author still insists upon that notion which does not allow of real freedom, we must suppose he thinks this "selecting power" to be never

really used, or to be itself controlled by some other force than his volition, or that, if it makes a "selection," that is ineffective and noways interrupts "the chain of causes and effects."*

Observing this writer further as a representative of the others, and as illustrating the irresistible tendency of the notion in question, we notice that he seems to see in mankind, beyond their material bodies, nothing but "mind." He even carries the same notion into the idea of the Great God. Let any one reflect but a little how different this is from what the Glorious Absolute One tells us of Himself. He is, "I Am That I Am." He "is a Spirit." He "is Love," &c., &c. Nowhere does He call Himself "Mind," or anything equivalent to it. Yet this is the favorite and almost the only designation of God in the book before us. Sometimes, indeed, He is named as "Will."† Yet this author expresses astonishment that a critic‡ (very justly, but he says) "by some strange confusion of thought seems to regard with horror the idea of the Will being regarded as part of the constitution of the mind." So

* A man who was always controlled in his acts by motives in that sense would have no more real freedom than a railway train drawn by a locomotive.

† It is a weak and illusive way of dealing with great *facts*, to use abstract terms and in a sort personify them by capital initial letters. It has an air of being very profound, and carries the credulous confidence of many readers by an appeal to their vanity as being able to understand such high and impartial philosophy as would not wound the susceptibilities of an atheist, by naming God as a Person; but would delicately introduce Him as the abstraction "Mind" or "Will." This passion for abstract terms and their personification is one of the weaknesses and misleading tendencies of intellectual vanity in this age, and upon many questions. In none such is it so irrational as in entertaining it as a rational question, whether there be "a *personal* God"; since He is the certain and absolute Person, and other personality only derived and relative as to Him.—See also Appendix F.

‡ Dr. Ward, as quoted in Appendix to "Reign of Law," p. 417.

then, in his view, even the Will of God is a part of "Mind."

This is not a mere error of words, but a great spiritual misapprehension which misleads in all reasoning from it. Divine and perfect truth tells man little of his mind (*i. e.* the mere intellectual capacity), but much of his *spirit*; his real person, of which the mind is but an organ or servant. The human will is the spirit of a man choosing or acting, with which he can escape from native degradation, become "the new man," love God and his fellow-man, and have eternal life; or, failing this, "perish." It is his weakness and danger to think only with pride of his faculty of knowing (as the first man did with such vast mischief). To apply this "vain imagination" to the Supreme One, and talk and think of Him who discloses Himself as Creator and King and Life of all,—Who pre-eminently judges and loves, and in the love and loving of Whom is our real glory and incomparable felicity—to talk and think of Him as "Mind," is even more to have "the foolish heart darkened."

When one who is by birth and breeding and choice really a Christian, does this, he gratuitously puts himself so far forth into the intellectual darkness which the great Christian sage describes of the Pagan philosophers.* He cannot then have the spiritual wisdom that is necessary for one who is a teacher of others in these matters. With the writer in question there is also probably the unconscious

* Ep. to the Romans i. 21.

influence of a certain hard and cold theology very much given to mere intellectual controversy. He disclaims this designation (of "Calvinist"); but while no doubt denying some of the formal statements of dogma which he supposes to be included in that term, he still shows plainly to an attentive reader the rigid and unspiritual temper of mind which the atmosphere of such religious training infuses into its subjects.

The author's evident ignorance (or forgetfulness) that there is any such thing in Our Lord's Kingdom upon Earth, as authority to teach these greatest things, corresponds with the lack of "sweetness and light" of a more spiritual religious life. There is, indeed, in this age a general heedlessness about the authority of the pastors of the Church as the chief instructors in "all things that pertain unto life and godliness,"* especially as though this had no application to that most effective teaching which is by books and other reading. Yet even one who thought that the ordination of Christ's ministers was not at all to be accounted of as to books, might have some just thoughts of them as "ambassadors for God," and be glad to make allusion in his writing to that divine law and order for maintaining truth in religion. On the contrary, this writer seems to hold in the spiritual polity what has been charged as an American idea in the social order, that "one man is as good as another and a great deal better." For we will not suppose that he thought being a hereditary

*1 Peter i. 3.—In this I think are fairly included thoughts of God, and all opinions that affect our faith in His Word.

legislator in one realm gave a man authority in the kingdom which "is not of this world."

The very temper of our age, which retains the intellectual hardness and spiritual insensibility which prevailed among the intelligent of the eighteenth century, and adds to this an immense mechanical activity and insatiable money-getting, mixing these by general reading through all classes of people, is a portent of great danger. And when one of the most accepted champions of faith sees in God only "Mind," *i. e.* the same thing in kind, only much greater in extent, which in men reads and thinks, and writes books for others, and is admired for it, and controls other men by hereditary legislation and such means, then we need something powerful to counteract this process and progress of benumbing and extinguishing all that is spiritual.

A man in an assured, comfortable and honorable station in life may be comparatively safe from such dangers as beset the most of those whom he addresses with his book. Certainly he can scarcely comprehend and sympathize with them in the wearing and degrading temptations to worldliness of their struggle for a comfortable life. But even he and all of us alike need everything to cultivate humility, and to soften our dull hearts to the emotion and action of a life of love to God. To persuade us that we are only body and mind, that is, matter and thought, is of the exact opposite tendency. It is unspiritual and selfish; for intellectual selfishness is no more just and loving than that which is brutal.

It is all of this present, this evil world. To continue this error yet farther, so as to have no higher idea even of the Divine Spirit than as a huge extension of the human mind, is to exclude ourselves from the most ennobling and purifying influence, the one which is necessary for real life, shutting off the glorious spiritual vision of God as the "Holy and Just and Good."

Even if we were all great noblemen, living in ancestral palaces with wide domains, carefully fed upon good books and fenced off from the fierce jealousies of selfish life, until at a mature age we should begin to govern common men and write books to instruct them, that process would sooner or later make us dull and unloving in spirit, and *unreligious*, not to say *irreligious*. But for what we are, almost all of us, with the common struggles and dangers of life, even in Christian lands, that will be a dreadful day when the narrow hardness and coldness of this mere intellectual notion of man and of God shall really prevail. He who does anything to oppose its progress and expel it from among men, is their friend. He who promotes it, however ignorantly, is their enemy.*

*It is a pleasure to see that the author of "The Reign of Law" does not, like so many with his advantages of fortune, waste his life in merely trying to enjoy this, but finds his pleasure in the attempt to be useful to others, however mistaken the undertaking before us may be.

CHAPTER XI.

AS RELATED TO THE WILL AND LOVE OF GOD.

AN even greater aspect of this question is as it regards the true thought of God's Will, as His Word teaches us and our best reason obediently receives that Word. This true thought is, that the Will of God is the cause and purpose of all else that is. The speculations of men have taught otherwise. Even Christian reasoners have lost sight of this and devised other notions, then assuming and laboring to interpret the words of Holy Writ according to their reasonings. Yet none the less is this the plain and simple meaning of "God's Word written," in all its consistent substance and in most direct expression.

The intellectual difficulty of this belief, so far as there is any, is in supposing that mere "arbitrary" will, as the ground of action or law, is unworthy even of a good man, much more, therefore, of God; so that as we must find some ground of *truth* and *right* in a man's will, something which is outside of and above that mere will, to make it good, we must do the same as to God's Will. But this is false in two respects: it tries the action of the One Most High Creator by the conditions in which He has made the many creatures; but still more, it discards the greatest thing which we know or can know of Him, viz., that He "*is love*." There is no such thing as "arbitrary will" rightly conceivable of Him. In

any such use "arbitrary" implies censure, as of one who is amenable to just principle and duty, yet acts without reference to them. We may speak of "arbitrary will" in a man (alas! we have too much reason in fact to do so,) because he may be selfish, and so in action unmerciful, unjust, unloving, tyrannical.

But of God it is not that His will is controlled by love, but that His will "is love," and all of goodness which that includes. It is not that He is so good that He will always obey eternal principles of truth, justice and kindness, but that there are such things as truth, justice and kindness simply by His loving Will,—His Love which wills and works eternally and absolutely. This, only this, and no less than this, is what we read in Holy Scripture: thus, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things: to whom be glory forever" [Rom. xi. 36]. "Thou hast created all things, and *for Thy pleasure* they are and were created" [Rev. iv. 11].

A little human creature, who is as to the Glorious One as a mote of dust to our whole world, may call this a "selfish" idea of God. But none the less is it the truth, and such a man's censure a silly blasphemy. If any one is honestly perplexed by the thought that God has given us wills also which revolt against enforced submission to mere Will in Him, this should be relieved by the counterpart truth that our real life is in the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord Thy God with all thy heart," &c. Such devotion of the creature to the Creator in personal love, not only

removes any pain of absolute obedience, but makes it the highest pleasure and honor.*

The true thought of God is also of ONE, not merely as we deny the notion of "gods many," but as we cease to divide Him, in our thoughts, into different organs, faculties, or "attributes."† He makes creatures of parts; He Himself is the one absolute Unit, and we must think of His love, will and power as one action and person. So far from there being any rational question whether God be a person, He is the ideal, the only real and absolute Person. We are only partly so, by His will of creation "in His own image."

As Will and Love and Work are thus all one with Him, we see that there is no past or future for Him, but one eternal present. The notion of time in which to effect something great, is necessary to us creatures, but has no sort of application to Him. So that the idea of His having set this great Cosmos in motion either sixty or six thousand centuries ago and left it to work by mechanical "forces," or "laws," is a mere invention of our insufficient intelligence, trying to describe what is Divine by human action. A much greater, and therefore more adequate and true conception would be, that God does all things now incessantly and directly. The danger will always be of having not too high, but too low ideas of Him; not that our own thoughts will be more true than the words of His Book, but that they will degrade those words by reading them according to the

* See Appendix G.—A Meditation upon the Eternity and Sole Self-Existence of God.

† None the less, even the more, we should entirely believe the august mystery of the Trinity.

inferior human nature. What those words plainly teach we have already seen in Chapters VI. and VII.

The author of "The Reign of Law," although blindfolded by that false notion, sometimes wanders very near to the true vision of the Glorious Immediate Presence of God in all things. Thus (p. 122) he quotes Sir John Herschel as saying: "It is but reasonable to regard the Force of Gravitation as the direct or indirect result of a Consciousness or a Will existing somewhere." He himself adds: "And even if we cannot certainly identify Force in all its forms with the direct energies of One Omnipresent and all-pervading Will, it is at least in the highest degree unphilosophical to assume the contrary; to speak or to think as if the Force of Nature were either independent of or even separate from the Creator's power."

In this he almost announces the simple truth which would dismiss all his illusion of a "reign of law," and dispense with all his labored arguments to maintain faith notwithstanding.* Yet, though he gropes up to the truth and seems to "feel after and find" it, so that you say, "At last he sees"; he does *not* see, and soon turns his back to wander among the tombs of false philosophies. Then you perceive that he is blindfolded by the vain imagination of a mechanical Universe; and even when he confronts the unclouded sun, sees only his bandage.†

* Though the phrase, "if we cannot certainly," &c., does betray a false and fatal prepossession, since it is not for us to "certainly identify" God, but by faith to behold Him in all things according to His Word and our best reason.

† Yet two pages after we have him speaking as of a certain truth about an *infinite number of elementary forces*, p. 125.

In other such writers, too, we find glimpses of this truth as the result of their best thinking. Dr. McCosh says :* "The profoundest minds in our day and in every day, have been fond of regarding this force (the *one* of which all so-called forces are thought to be but different modes), not as something independent of God, but as the very power of God acting in all action, so that 'in Him we live and move and have our being.'"[†] Even Mr. Alfred Wallace, one of the most advanced and most admired of living naturalists, in following up the reason of the thing, cannot resist this conclusion, that "the whole Universe is *not merely dependent* on, but actually *is* the Will of higher intelligence, or of one Supreme Intelligence."[‡]

This even from one who professes no obedience to the Word of God! Is it not then amazing that our defenders of the Faith (whether rightful or self-constituted), our Christian philosophers opposing the unspiritual and even atheistic consequences drawn from a "reign of law," should advance to this glorious vision of truth, which contains in itself the refutation of all those errors, regard it with admiration as the highest achievement of thought (never thinking that it is simply true religion as revealed to them in the only true religion)—and then retreat into the malarious marsh of a false notion, to continue there a defensive and disastrous war for the

* Christianity and Positivism, p. 15.

[†] Yet in the very next page he says, "But with the Forces we have the Matter of the Universe, in which I believe the Forces reside," p. 16.

[‡] Natural Selection, p. 368.

truth and faith of God ! It is only another instance of the spiritual misguiding which the idea of " laws of Nature " works. Some of the " profoundest minds " have apprehended the great truth of God's incessant power in all, without such stultifying contradictions.*

It will assist in establishing and confirming in our minds this truth, to trace it by its natural steps in reason, as any honest Christian with patience can do just as well as the philosophers. We will begin with noticing that all the recent studies in science have tended toward the opinion, that what have been heretofore called different " forces of Nature," as gravitation, heat, electricity, chemical affinity, &c., were " correlated," passed into one another in certain cases, and were really the same thing in different appearances ; also that the amount of this one force was always the same.

But what then is this " Force " which we talk about ? What is it, for instance, when we see something move and say that this could not be without some *force* applied ? If there be something present which is alive and has a will, we ascribe the motion to that ; otherwise we say that the thing " seems to be alive," or " you would think it was alive." But we never think the force to be the matter we see, but something invisible acting within or upon it.

And is this invisible force in each such instance a person who chooses to act—a created spirit with a will, like the soul of man ? Surely not ; for, to say nothing of other reasons, this motive power seems to

* Des Cartes, Malebranche, Al Gazil, Augustinc, St. Paul.

be not many such, nor even a few great forces, but one very great Will. And is this Will a great *created* Spirit, interposed by the Creator between Himself and all matter? No; we could not wisely think of God as having created and interposed between Himself and matter a force and will whose only purpose would be to move matter according to *His* will. The simple and evident thought would be that this one Will and Force was the Creator Himself.

Let us retrace this enquiry by the clue of another simple illustration. If we see a huge railway train, which has been standing still upon the track, begin to move, what do we know to be the cause or force of this movement? Not the cars, or any part of them, not the locomotive wheels, for they were there before, and have no will to revolve now instead of standing still as before. Not the pistons, or cylinders, or valves, or levers, all for the same reason. But we *are* sure that all this movement came from a man (though where we stand we may not see him), who had a will that the train should move, and with a slight pressure of his hand set all the rest in motion. Thus we have an instinct of reason that all force is really in *will*, and that other things which seem to be causes and forces are only things moved themselves by the real force, and are the successive links of *effect* and not of cause.

But you may say, "No, it was not the man's will, but the expansive power of steam. If that had not been present, all his contrivance and all his *will*

would not have moved this great weight a hair's breadth. This force of steam might even *against* his will burst its enclosures and destroy all around it, even this master man." Has it then a will too? No; if a force at all, it is a blind and unthinking one; itself must be but a mere effect. An hour ago it did not exist; only after the man had placed water where it is now, and kindled fire beneath it. And so steam came itself from the man's will.

But in another aspect it is true that there was force besides the man's will. His will was a force contained within plain limits. By it he could, as he did purposely, first "raise" the steam with water and by fire, and then raise the lever to use this force for motion. But the achieving of this motion by his will is a very different kind from that simple will by which he walks, or with his hand merely raises the valve-lever. Of it we commonly say that "by contrivance he uses the forces of Nature to do his will." Even the first-mentioned simple power of will is his only as God has made and sustained his life, and within such range as He appoints to His creatures—great as regards the goodness of the Maker, but very small in comparison of that Maker's power of Will. The other is the *use* of force which in no sense is his—a use allowed by, made for him by, Him who really *is* All Power.

These "forces of Nature"—this one Force really in various modes, which is not man's will—is it or not the will of some person? From what has been already shown we cannot doubt it. Matter, even in

the most subtle invisible form, and beyond all our senses, cannot be Force; it is the object upon which Force acts. And when we get back of all the effects which seem each to impel the succeeding one, to what gives the real push, we know that it must be a *person* who *chose* to give an impulse, and did so. Shall we, as so many do, call this person "Nature"? and if so, what will we really mean by it, or will we mean anything?

Rather let the highest truth, that is, true religion, answer the question. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground *without your Father*." The ceaseless, immediate will of God is that Force of all movement and life, except the little part of it committed by Him to the wills of such *persons* as He creates. Of course this Divine Power is utterly unlike anything that man or any other creatures of God can do with their small wills and mere use of some little part of His great workings.

But how do those who discourse of a "reign of law" treat this transcendent truth? They shall speak for themselves.* "It is, indeed, the *completeness of the analogy* between our own works on such a scale and the works of the Creator on an infinitely large scale, which is the greatest mystery of all. Man is under constraint to adopt the principle of adjustment, because the Forces of Nature are external and independent of his will. They may be managed, but they cannot be disobeyed. It is im-

* Reign of Law, p. 125.

possible to suppose that they stand in the same relation to the Will of the Supreme. Yet it seems as if He took the same method of dealing with them, never violating them, never breaking them, but always ruling them by what we call adjustment and contrivance. Nothing gives us such an idea of the immutability of Laws as this; nor does anything give us such an idea of their pliability to *use*. How imperious they are, yet how submissive! How *they* reign, yet how they serve!"

This is in substance saying that God is, in what He does in the material Universe, just a man "on an infinitely larger scale." The writer had said just before, "There is *this* difference, indeed, that in regard to our works we see that our knowledge of natural laws is very imperfect and our control of them is very feeble; while in the machinery of Nature there is evidence of complete knowledge and of absolute control." That is, God uses the vast forces around Him, with a profitable ingenuity like ours when we convert them to our purposes in steam-engines and the like: only He knows *all* about them and avails Himself of them with much greater energy.

This may not unlikely pass with inattentive readers for something wise and true. But it is amazing folly. The writer seems to get a glimpse of the absurdity, and to make a feeble protest against just censure of it, saying, "It is impossible to suppose that they stand in the same relation to the Will of the Supreme." Yet he begins and ends

his song of worship to these "immutable" and "imperious" deities with that very supposition. "Impossible," indeed! Could anything be more preposterous? What he states as "the difference" between man's contrivances and adjustments, and God's "mighty acts" and "wonderful works," is only the mention of two incidents of this cuignorance and weakness. The real difference is that what we use is a very little part of His action. Yet we are told that He, "by a complete analogy, takes the same method of dealing with"—His own Will and acts!—"never violating, never breaking, but always ruling them!" That is, He avails Himself of His own acts to do what He does! He never "breaks" nor "violates," but always "rules" His own glorious Will, which is all love and truth and power! "There is *evidence*" that God has complete knowledge and absolute control—of what He is all the time doing Himself! Truly,

—"the force of folly could no farther go."

Such irreligious absurdities show how "they walk in a vain shadow" who assume as a primary truth the pagan and unspiritual notion of "laws" and "forces" as anything else than the immediate will of the "Most High," so that they can even talk of them as "imperious" toward God. The more they reason about the Divine the less they really see of it; and so the language and very conception of a religion of "gods many," the "soul of the world" of Plato, and

the "Nature" of Aristotle, displace the spiritual vision of Him in Whom "we live and move and have our being."

For truth in this enquiry we return them to the contemplation of that transcendent Person. Nothing is true that does not accord with truth concerning Him. He is essentially *One*; not *made up* of power, truth, love, and the like, but simply the One Eternal, All-including Life, Will, Power, Truth and *Love*. This all-powerful Love has a continual will that there shall be existence and life such as we behold, and are ourselves a part of it. To fancy that Almighty Will controlled by, or effecting its purposes by contriving and adjusting, something outside of itself, or limited in what it would do now by anything it has done in the past; or to have any such conception of His power as obscures to us the thought of His personal love, and substitutes for it at best a machine of "benevolent design,"—to use the cold, thin and impotent phrase which all such reasoning substitutes for the mighty truth of God's love—is blindness to the vision of Him as He "declares" Himself to us in His Word. Therefore, the notion of "natural law" and its "reign" is false; and the belief that all things are and move simply because He wishes them to at the time, must be true.

CHAPTER XII.

ITS EFFECT UPON THE INTERPRETATION OF HOLY
SCRIPTURE.

NOR can this notion be held without a certain effect upon our apprehension of the Word of God. This of itself would make it a religious question. (See also *supra*, Chap. III). We have already had a glimpse of this in our preliminary discussions, specially as to deciding it by "Natural Theology," (Chap. IV), and as to the comparative certainty of science, or a Word of God. (Chap. V). But now our enquiry is: "Supposing belief of a 'reign of law,' what must of necessity be our method of understanding the Word of God, and specially of interpreting the Holy Scriptures?"

As a matter of fact,* in proportion as this notion has prevailed in modern Christendom, it has been accompanied by a denial of literal fact to the holy history of the Gospel, and of the older Word of God, upon the ground that what is miraculous and supernatural cannot reasonably be believed. The argument for this from the premise of a "reign of law" is to my mind irresistible. The Divine truth in Christian faith has nevertheless overpowered that false conclusion in a great number who maintain this notion of "natural law," and are among the most successful in scientific research. But even with

*See *passim* the History, Chap. VIII.-IX.

them it has brought in a new method of apprehending the Word of God, by the consent of almost all Christian writers of this age to change the former accepted meaning of certain parts of Holy Scripture to accord with what "Science" is said to have proved. This is a very serious matter. No new method of understanding God's Word ought to be allowed without careful study of all its merits, and of its necessary or even probable results. The general relations of God's Word to man's science have been already set forth (Chap. V). We will now consider the actual tendency and results so far of the prevailing notion. Some may see in this only a progress of truth. If so, it is good, religious, divine: an argument for the "reign of law." But to others it seems the confusion and discrediting of the most valuable truth. May God Himself show us which is right.

Until quite lately these results have been confined to new interpretations of the history of Creation (Genesis I.) and a few other supernatural facts.* But there is already a further tendency and advancing results, the noting of which belongs here. We drift slowly perhaps, but steadily, toward more such changes. Some perhaps notice this movement, and secretly rejoice in it. Some are undisturbed, because they suppose we have seen the worst or all of the change; otherwise they would be alarmed into protesting against and renouncing this method which

* These new interpretations and some kindred questions will be best considered in Chap. XIII. following this.

they have consented to so far. Real truth, however, will be best promoted by our all distinctly seeing and openly admitting what is on the way.

Of late the men of science generally agree that they have proved — as plainly as their hundreds of thousands of years for building the crest of this globe, or millions for the present order of the Universe — that mankind inhabited the earth long before the period in which we Christians have always understood God's Word to tell us that man was first made. Now this if allowed to be true, makes one's faith somewhat dizzy. We may have but just, and after a long time, got over a like shock once received about the "days of creation." We may have been finally persuaded by our scientific fellow-Christians, clerical or lay, that we must in only just that instance admit that the meaning of God's Word was never understood until the present Geology and Astronomy appeared.

But now comes another like demand, and not a word of refusal is heard from the Christian philosophers. They are either looking the other way, as if unaware, or looking on in silent approval, or looking down with silent timidity. What are we all to do? Not that a man may not in the most high and blessed sense of those words, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," if man were created sixty thousand instead of six thousand years ago. But it does matter greatly, and it does affect our faith generally in the Word of God, whether what has seemed its plain meaning for thousands of years in all that

Divine Society which is its "witness and keeper," is to be changed with the changes of human science.

Nor is this all. Joined with the new belief about the antiquity of our race, and, like it, received by the Christian men of science with a silence that betokens no good to firm convictions in religion, is one about the nature of the first man and the change to the present, as represented by the phrases of "stone age" and the like. It means that mankind began long before what Moses relates: filthy and stupid and brutish (if not mere brutes), hiding from the storms like bears and serpents in mouldy caves, digging the earth with their fingers in search of roots, or tearing raw flesh for their food; that from this some of them ascended by slow steps of a thousand or ten thousand years each, to make tools with clumsy bits of stone; that thence in the same progress they rose to have language and writing, to imagine a Person or persons far above them, and thus a religion; that on from this in the present historical period an ingenious few became more and more intelligent, partly elevating the rest with them, until this culminates in a "scientist" of the nineteenth century, who knows about "the Reign of Law," and adores "Mind."*

There is another account of the beginning of man which can be best stated in these sentences: "God

* It is worthy of notice that this "discovery" appears now among those whose ancestors were naked savages centuries after those who believed in the Book of Genesis were an intelligent and orderly people, worshipping the One God with a sublime ritual, and having in their hands, as His Word, this and other writings which have never since been surpassed in spiritual devotion.

created man in His own image" [Gen. i. 27]. "And the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. . . . And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air, and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them" [Gen. ii. 15, 19]. "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor" [Ps. viii. 4, 5]. "God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions" [Eccles. vii.] "Because that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God." [Rom. i. 21.]

This account and the new theory are plainly incompatible. I say this simply, though we shall soon no doubt have some one adjusting Scripture and faith to this science. He who accepts the later will do so by abandoning the former in its old natural sense. And this is what the Science of our day is preparing for us all, and which our defenders of the faith, bound and blindfolded by their false notion of a "reign of law," are powerless to resist. Judge *it* then by this tendency.

I have not even yet referred to the further theory of some, that long before the *brute man* he had a progenitor in the brute ape; and that indefinitely (not to say infinitely) farther back, all that now live were shapeless *moners* in slime, and even before that all that now exists was only some warm vapor. It is true that some of the Christian naturalists argue

against this, (while some of them seem rather drawn to it). But their arguments are largely and literally *ad hominem*, appealing against the disgrace of such a genealogy. That is scarcely reason. The question is not much worth disputing about, if we are to surrender the literal Christian truth about Adam's innocence and fall. One cannot be sure that this fight is not made with an eye to a final compromise in that surrender. Let those who contemplate that be well advised that there are others whom they can never represent in that capitulation, nor afterwards persuade to march out of the fortress of a simple faith, under any of those guaranties.

"But does not God also teach man by the Book of Nature? Is not His voice thus in His works as we wisely study them?" Yes, in a manner and sense. All knowledge comes from Him, including what we, with the mind which He has made, get by noticing and studying the other things which He has made. But certainly, as shown before (see Chapter V.), different matters of knowledge may be of different importance and of different certainty. And are we always sure that what these men think they discover is the truth, and is what God teaches in His works? On the other hand, "we *know* that God spake by Moses" and that Our Lord is "the Word of God." When there seems a discrepancy between these and the supposed truth of God in Science, what may we most wisely do? Is this last so certainly true compared with anything which we have learned from the other, that we must always

adjust the meaning of Holy Writ to the Science of our times, no matter what violence that may do to its more evident meaning?

This notion, already confuted in Chapter V. (which see), would appear to prevail with the Christian writers of our age. So it is well even here with some repetition to expose its folly. Of the two related factors, then, Holy Scripture is the variable, Science the constant. Can anything be more absurd than this according to Christian faith? Even waiving this superior certainty of a Word of God, and looking only at an evident and admitted fact, the Science is very incomplete and altogether in a state of transition. In this consists the interest of study and the excitement of discovery in all our Science. Could we hope to secure certain truth by adjusting one variable to another variable? How much less by "reconciling" what is already complete and divinely certain, to supposed truth, the defects and mistakes of which the twentieth century may smile at.

If any one say that it is not the written Word of God which we correct, but our wrong apprehension of it, is not this really the same thing? What does the Almighty One mean in addressing us with words, except that we shall apprehend His meaning in them? It is, indeed, true of human speech in its very nature, that its meaning has a certain range of variation, accordingly as we may interpret it. But this uncertainty of language is comparative and within a very narrow range. It must also be at its

least when God uses it to speak to men. It is as much His creation as are the stars. Words are certainly the vehicle of most direct approach of knowledge to the human mind.* Even Science testifies to this, in that it must use language to teach its results.

Then any knowledge which comes by our observations of, and reasonings upon, the other works of God, is, at least where it bears even most remotely upon the spiritual and Divine, not only cramped by our inferior intelligence, but also poisoned by the subtle mixture of our moral perversion, our spiritual "error, ignorance, pride and prejudice." That this is also in a measure true of our learning from Holy Scripture, only shows the more plainly how yet more uncertain is what we learn (or think we do) by a method in which truth passes much farther through the disturbing medium.

Thus of two messages from God coming to our knowledge, that rather should govern and interpret the other which was later in time, more direct, and specially provided for our highest or spiritual life after that had suffered a great injury, as in the Fall of man. This may close some gaps in the first imparted knowledge through which man had ignorantly strayed. It certainly meets him in his later and actual condition. Our Divine revelation, with its wonderful progress through four thousand years, was given us later than the establishment of those

* Unless we except from this mere sensations of physical pleasure or pain.

uniform movements of matter which we study as a "Book of Nature."*

Then in the interpretation of a *Word* of God, we are not left each of us to his individual notions or accidental prejudice, or the sort of "authority" known in Science, which is only the often contradictory statements of irresponsible authors who chance to have studied and written upon these matters; statements which have come to our notice by the mere intellectual fashion of our time and country, which may be as blind and arbitrary as that of dress. But God spoke this Word by "holy men of old," moved by His inspiration; then by His Son in person and that Son's Apostles; and then gave His Word written to a great society always to be continued, in which Our Lord and King dwells perpetually, and is now among all men by the Holy Ghost. With whatever differences of particulars all we Christians "believe in the Holy Catholic Church," we recognize through it a vast superiority of authoritative meaning in Holy Scripture compared with any "Book of Nature."

For these and other like reasons (see Chapter V.) it is, therefore, against the Christian faith to allow that the plain, simple meaning of Holy Writ must be adjusted to the Science of our times, *or to any part of it*. This is not a mere question with our con-

*It does not lessen the force of this that the knowledge through "Nature" is only now coming among men; or that it too has a slow progress of development. The truth around us was set before man first, when he was innocent and perfect himself. That (you say) has never varied. The Word of God to men *is* later, and is given to them in their subsequent and still existing condition.

temporaries, of confuting German rationalists, or successfully exchanging sarcasms in our own language with Messrs. Tyndall and Darwin. The great truth must be vindicated, that no accumulation of the scientific research in all the ages, no great names of the past, not Plato, Bacon, or Newton, more than our living naturalists, have any authority against the plain meaning of "God's Word Written." It is true that in different ways we might find that we had been used to take some of the sacred words in a wrong sense, in some unimportant particulars, and that we should then gladly correct the error. But due reverence and anything like real faith in it as God's Word, should make us very careful in this. We should be on our guard against our own levity, love of novelty, or pride of discovery. Certainly we must not do this ever as a timid concession to the hostile criticism of unbelievers.

Is it not *sometimes* this timidity which says that "Holy Scripture does not intend to teach Science"? But, as shown before (see Chapter V.), it does teach *facts, i. e. things done*, both natural and supernatural. It also always mentions them as done by a *will*, either God's or that of some such of His creatures as He has given the limited will possible for them. This is the absolute and most important truth. Outside of it lies for us a range of possible discovery, the observation and study and application to our use in brief life upon earth, of the wonderful things He has made around us, and the wonderful usual order in which they live and move. This part of our

knowledge, with its multitude of little details and its brief inferior importance, though like all else given by the love of God and best used to make us love Him, does not find place in His Word. It is left to, it constitutes, our science, with small actual accumulations so far, and, no doubt, considerable mistakes; with great possibilities, which are also the measure of the actual deficiencies. However great it may seem to us, what an inconsiderable asteroid it really is, floating in the vast infinite of truth! We ought in this discussion to compare it in all the particulars just mentioned with "the depth (and height) of the wisdom and knowledge of God."

This science of ours, Holy Writ indeed does not teach. In this, among other things, those writings differ in a wonderful way from any other so-called "sacred books" of nations or sects. (Such things which are not divine are sure to make an ambitious display of what prevails as the "wisdom of men" at the time.) Nevertheless it does as we have already seen, relate *facts* both natural and supernatural. It is not of such importance to true faith to which of these classes any one such fact of what God has done belongs, even whether we may not have heretofore by mistake referred it to the wrong class. In either case it is the direct will and act of God. But if we remove it in our thoughts from the supernatural to the natural upon grounds which suggest unbelief in all the supernatural, that is a great thing.

With this thought to change the previous apparent and accepted meaning of any fact of Scripture; to

treat these Divine wonders as we would some unexplained wonder of common observation, as only waiting for the discovery of another "law" to be reduced to a part of the inexorable machinery of "Nature"; to assume that we would gain something to truth by reducing the number of miracles, though we admit that for spiritual necessities truth must still submit to some of such violent anomalies,—all this has just that tendency to cause doubt of the Word of God.

No: the only rational use of a Word of God requires us to *expect* in it the supernatural, much of the supernatural: to look for the truth in such heretofore supposed meaning of its facts, rather than in any new meaning suggested by our new (or our old) science applied. The purpose of that Word is faith in God. Did any one ever believe the less for any miracle therein related,—or the more for a "natural" account of the same incident? Is not the reverse of this true? The tendency of all new interpretation by our science is toward general distrust. The secret thought at once asks (even if there be no distinct consciousness of this,) "If this which seemed to be told as the direct act of God is not so, but a movement of the great machine of laws—why not as well the other miracle?" There is nothing in the nature of the new method or its results so far which gives assurance that it will leave the rest of God's Word or any of it to be understood as it was by the first Christians.

By all these instances then (and others, which for

special reasons have been deferred to the next chapter), it appears that the now prevailing method of adjusting the meaning of Holy Writ to such scientific opinions as are generally (and as fast as they are) received, is very dangerous to the perception and reception of the highest truth. Does not this demand a pause in that movement, of all who *love truth*? It is the love of truth which is supposed and appealed to in all intelligent Christians for the movement. Some may have been fearing that their prejudice in behalf of religious faith would obstruct their admission of some other truth which "is of God." But may this not be rather their fear of the scornful reproaches of those, who, granting their devotion to physical facts wherever they seem to lead when pursued alone, do *not* love the greater light or come to it; as He who is all truth itself says, "Lest their deeds should be reprov'd."

But why are you not yet more afraid of hindering that greater truth which is faith in the Word of God? I also seem to hear His voice now from Heaven in the very words He spoke upon this earth, perhaps then as a prophecy of the foolish "wisdom" of this world which He now sees among men: "Heaven and earth (the very objects of the supposed truth which you now prefer) shall *pass away*; but My words shall *not* pass away."

CHAPTER XIII.

THIS ACTUAL INTERPRETATION BY OUR PRESENT ASTRONOMY AND GEOLOGY.

WE are warned by this tendency and progress to question even what has been generally allowed in our day, to go back and examine anew what our present Geology and Astronomy are supposed to say of the history of Creation, as given in the Word of God. This is in substance, that this world was in a process of formation in layers of rock for many thousands of years before man existed ; that the stars moved in their orbits, and this globe as one of them, for ages hundreds-fold of all our history, beginning, if they had any real beginning, as condensing vapors. This is said to be certain truth, so that the Holy Scriptures must agree with it, if they are true.

Now this contradicts what until our time has been always supposed to be plainly told in the beginning of our Holy Scriptures : viz. that all other Creation took place within five-days before that of man. What then ought Christian believers to do ? Some (but not those most versed in natural science, or any whom it is the intellectual fashion to admire,) say that this only proves science to be from the Evil One, and that Christians ought to reject and abhor it. Others who are generally looked up to as being the best informed and most liberal in thought,

say that the science is certainly true ; and that as all truth is consistent, and as what God says in His Word must agree with what He says in His works, therefore we must, in order to "save faith," find in the Word some meaning agreeing with this science. Others yet are perplexed and distressed between these two parties, not wishing to reject any truth, or to be the ignorant enemies of real faith, which the friends of science say the first mentioned class are ; yet having an instinctive fear that faith has more to dread in the other direction.

Perhaps there is not yet enough known for a final judgment of the question. Pending this, and whenever such judgment is to be made, the following principles should be observed.* 1. No conclusions from other research and study can be as certainly true as the actual meaning of God's Word. 2. The ill results of a mistaken opinion about the earth's construction, would be vastly less than those of losing faith in God. 3. Holy Scripture is complete in itself ; science immeasurably incomplete. 4. The supposed scientific proofs after all rest upon assumptions, which, however plausible, are not certain, as *e. g.* that rocks were always formed, and vegetable and animal life passed at the same rate of time as like things occur now, or that light travels from the fixed stars at the same rate of speed as we measure it in our solar system, or that the most remote star was not created with light from it already reaching

*I make no apology here or elsewhere for casual *repetition* of things which need "line upon line" in our day.

the earth.* Who *knows* this? Could one of us have been alive "when the earth was without form, and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep," would he not have been "scientifically certain" that there would never "be light," nor a "round world, and they that dwell therein"?

5. It is *possible* that our previous idea of what God's Word did say of these things was our mistake, to be corrected, when discovered, with the same grateful and ready reverence as makes us prefer its actual meaning to any opinion. And yet 6. it is possible that we may yet find that God chose to do all that work of Creation in twenty-four, or in one hundred and twenty hours of our present time, which *it is absurd* to doubt that He could do, while it is *not* possible that His Word is not truth.

Finally, it needs but a little reflection to see that if a written "Word of God" is to be construed without regard to its apparent meaning by something outside of itself, the real authority is in this "Supreme Court" of construction, whatever it may be. You may put any "constitution" or instrument in writing in what words you please, and if you concede that these words are to mean whatever I say they do, I then am the "constitution." No matter where

* Indeed it is far more rational to think that the Eternal Lord made in a moment of time all this Nature, with its suggestion to the merely worldly mind of long processes of creation, meaning this as one of those mysteries of spiritual discipline which we find everywhere else, and which are greater than all matter—thus trying and training our faith in Him, than that He arranged in His word such apparent contradictions of the actual Creation as must perplex our faith. There is really no firm ground short of this as far back as the most extravagant theory of "evolution." Are we to believe that on the third day the seed was first made and grew, or the full-grown tree created; on the fifth day, the egg with its subsequent growth, or the full-grown bird?

this infallibility of construction resides; whether in one man over all others, or each man for himself in his private judgment, or in "public opinion," or in that uncertain and irresponsible collection of the opinions of some famous men which is called science; this which tells us what the words are to mean, and not the very words, is what we shall then obey.*

So the very application of this method to the Divine story of Creation

—"must give us pause."

It is not too late for every one who believes that the Holy Bible is the Word of God to mankind, to renounce any method of construing it which tends of necessity to extinguish its authority and blessing as such. Any great name which may be cited in favor of the false principle is then only a great misfortune. Therefore I must not hesitate to make protest even against Bishop Butler, when he subjects Holy Writ in the same way to "Natural Religion" (which is only a name for some of our fallible reasonings), saying: "Indeed, if in Revelation there be found any passages, the seeming meaning of which is contrary to Natural Religion, we may most certainly conclude such seeming meaning not to be the real one."

Doubtless this great writer felt sure that there

* This great subject is not without its difficulties in several directions. All men read God's Word in some measure with prepossessions of education and authority. And rightly so. Still it has *its own* sense and force. We must endeavor that the authority which influences us be wise, responsible, devout; and as being that which the "Word" itself recognizes as "the pillar and ground of the truth."

could be no such occasion for changing the apparent meaning of Scripture as always received in the Church. But if with his usual wise caution he had reflected that "Natural Theology" has no fixed standard and no authority; is for each man what he may think according to his prejudices or moral perversions; that as far as the phrase represents any truth, we may best get that from Holy Scripture itself; he would not have given his authority to this false principle. Steady, obedient, valiant faith in the Word of God will not be looking for these new reasonings. Weak doubt will only grow more timid, and perverse unbelief more obstinate for such suggestions. It is rash and foolish to say that he who disbelieves your science because he believes that it contradicts the Word of God, is an ignorant bigot, rather than he who doubts or misconstrues that Word because he believes the science. Of the two, probably the latter is "wise" only in his own conceit, and "the fool" in fact.

Another point of view from which to examine the same question is as to the different provinces of religious and scientific knowledge. In that division surely Creation and Providence lie in the domain of Religion; so thought the Christian men of science of an earlier time, from Copernicus to Newton. But it is just there that science now assumes dominion and launches its edicts; in that of Providence by the very notion of a "reign of law"; in that of Creation by its scientific "cosmogonies."* Our philosophic

* Their only resemblance to the Divine history is that the *theories* are "without form and void" and "darkness is upon the face of the deep."

Christians do make some resistance in the region of Providence and contend for faith and prayer, though quite inefficiently on account of their fatal concession of "laws of Nature."

But upon the cosmogony they seem as if "there was no breath left in them." And what is the cosmogony in plain, honest, Christian English? It is the Creation of "all things visible." The Book of God begins with it. That event and that history of it are often mentioned in other parts of Holy Scripture, even by Our Lord Himself. There is nothing more Divinely sublime in all the Book. To my best reason it seems surpassed by nothing else as a matter of revelation, that God Our Heavenly Father would in His love tell us how the Universe we live in and behold began, as He alone could tell it.

Applying again a true principle, we should say rather that, since any loss of faith in God and His Word is far worse for our or any age, than to check the advance of human science, it is the wisest love of truth to distrust and decline the scientific conclusions wherever they ask us to change the apparent, simple meaning of that Word. Let us recall certain words which we might even expect our own sober reason to utter in warning; but which, coming from God above, are plainly His reproof of that intellectual folly of our age: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" &c. [Job xxxviii. 4-7.]*

There seems to be in many minds a thought, per-

* The eager credulity of some of our Christian scholars in all the assertions and inferences of geologists, following their crudities and changes with such wresting and adjusting of the Divine words as may make an *idem sonans*, is ludicrous and pitiable.

haps never yet set forth in words, which influences their judgment of this question. For this reason, and also in anticipation that it may be given in reply to this argument, it needs notice now. It is that there is something in the accumulated knowledge of natural processes, and generalizing of them, and perhaps besides in the great number of ingenious machines and the vast amount of reading and of readers which distinguishes the nineteenth century from any other age, that it must make new rules and principles for itself; so that what was wise and well enough for all former generations would not be so now; that we have outgrown all their garments both in dimensions and fashion.

With all just allowance for what has been gained in the above-mentioned respects, the possible, the probable consequences of such an intoxicating folly as I describe, in destroying for us all, what certainly always is of value to men, the wisdom of experience, and that given from heaven long ago to the whole race, are truly terrible. Certainly natural sciences, machines and newspapers do not make what was spiritually true for mankind in the first century any less so in the nineteenth. Fortunately there is a great beacon of positive truth fixed in the midst of the ages, which does not vary with the supposed discoveries of men either by increase or diminution. But if we subject *this* also to change by new interpretation of its plain words; or if we answer its mighty condemnation of some of our false notions which tend to obscure the truth of God, by *silence* about what it would mention if true—answer this by

saying that only now are mankind intelligent enough to comprehend the new truth (*e. g.* of a "reign of law"); that this is why the "modern thought" is not recognized in Holy Scripture, then the mischief is without a remedy.

"There is more hope for a fool than for a generation thus 'wise in its own conceit'." Let us always remember that the Word of God began to come to man in the early ages of the world, when the purest traditions of the primitive and innocent knowledge of Him remained least corrupted by the increasing false religion and wicked living. Had there been any such divine traditions of "laws" and "forces of Nature," we should find traces of them now in that written Word. Were that notion such a necessary one in the true contemplation of the works of God as it is now commonly assumed to be, we should find it in the thoughts of such wise, great-souled and deep-thinking men as Moses and Job.

Then these holy writings continue increasing with a wonderful order and history of development until a "fulness of time" comes, when they are completed with circumstances, and with express words too, which assure us that at last we have all that God will say most distinctly to man in this world. Only reverent and grateful obedience are now left to us. For any of these later generations to fancy that it has achieved some knowledge beyond this in religion, or in matters any way bearing upon religion, is mere folly. The very utmost it can do in the highest knowledge, and more than it will do in fact at the best, is to learn and obey the New Testament.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PERSECUTION OF GALILEO ; AND, IS THE NOTION OF
A "REIGN OF LAW" NECESSARY TO SCIENTIFIC
INVESTIGATION ?

THE religious opposition 300 years ago to the Copernican astronomy, and especially the prosecution and retraction of Galileo, are always now brought forward as conclusive proof that the Word of God must never be cited against a supposed demonstration of "science." But the cases are not parallel. The words about the "rising" and "setting" of the sun have not been altered in our Bibles since the sixteenth century, nor does any one ever try to "reconcile" them with science then condemned as heretical, but which all Christians now receive for truth. We have not changed our familiar language about the same things. Children and astronomers alike describe the same phenomena in the same way as they did before this, and as the Holy Scriptures did and do.

That was also really a contest between two scientific parties, and not merely as to whether we could believe the Divine Word unless as construed by human science. The old or Ptolemaic party resisted the new or Copernican by every argument and means they could find. They appealed to the appearance of the sun every day traversing the sky, *and* to the word of Holy Scripture expressing the

same. It was as if some one who now ignorantly believes that account of the solar system were to argue with you that it must be true, since you cannot help saying always that the sun rises and sets. The argument against Galileo had indeed more effect, because it appealed then in behalf of a previous opinion to the wise aversion of Christian believers to adjusting God's Word to men's science. This even if you call it a prejudice is more akin to truth than the self-sufficient levity which loves change for its own sake. All reverence and faith involve some pre-judgment. When this is employed upon true religion, candor and truth are also of the company, and any errors of opinion at first maintained are not seriously mischievous and soon disappear.

It was so in that controversy. We are all Copernicans now, but this has not changed the interpretation of a single word of Holy Writ, or the substance of its truth to us by the minutest shade, nor at all weakened men's faith in it as all Divine. Will any one who understands the facts seriously maintain that the dispute about Galileo is to be compared for its influence upon the religion of the people, with the great ferment in all minds over geology, "biology," and the "reign of law," the pending debate before all people about what belief and reverence are due to the historical Christian faith ?*

*The decree of the Roman Inquisition in that case begins thus: "The proposition that the sun is the centre of the world and immovable, is *absurd, philosophically false, and heretical,*" etc. We are no way responsible for the acts of the Roman Inquisition, least of all committed to any Papal approval or infallibility. It is agreed, however, that a religious opposition to the Copernican astronomy was made throughout Christendom, upon the same mistaken grounds.

But this is not the only matter of difference. The religious opposition to the Copernicans was not because they denied things supernatural. The theory of motion of earth or sun lay altogether within the *natural*. Whichever was true it described the *usual order*, and had no more to do with spiritual faith than the contest between undulatory and atomic theories of light. No suggestion was made in behalf of the new knowledge, that in consequence of it men could not believe the miraculous things which are told in Holy Scripture. The greatest philosophers of that age were indeed all of them devout believers of the Gospel, who had not only no wish, but no thought or fear to impair its authority. We may challenge the citation of any sentence of theirs to the effect that God's Word is to be construed and understood anew by the new science: that Christian men are to labor anxiously to "reconcile" the old and Divine to the new and human, so as to make it rational and possible to believe in God. The question with them was the reverse of this; their concern was to make sure that God's Word did not make their science incredible by contradicting it.

But what all the scientific Christian men are now busy with, is to make an alarmed and all but despairing effort to "bridge over the chasm between Christian belief and modern thought,"* while the other men of science tell them that they are too late, that they must make their choice between the two. They add with a sort of lofty melancholy — and

* Christlieb.

contempt, that while Christian faith is a fine thing for those who are ignorant enough to keep it, it is henceforth impossible for a thoughtful man. Thus the whole case is changed. The fact that religious feeling three centuries ago was engaged on the side of the Ptolemaic astronomy against the Copernican, and that we all now see that this was wrong, does not prove, nor in the remotest degree go to prove, that we ought to change the apparent and heretofore accepted meaning of Holy Scripture, on account of the science of our times. To surrender the old prejudice then, would have been right. To yield the false principle now put forth, is wrong.

He who will consider profoundly, and clearly set forth the wide difference between that controversy of the sixteenth century and this of the nineteenth, will do a great service to Christendom. But without that, those who are perplexed by the reasonings in question, and still more disheartened by the readiness of many Christian writers to make the fatal concession, while no voice seems to dare make remonstrance, may well take heart again. Let them say firmly: "We cannot yield this (whatever you makers of discourses and books may choose to do,) without losing some of our old reverence and trust for the Word of God. And what was said three hundred years ago of its meaning about sunrise, or what was done to Galileo in 1632, has no force to compel such a dreadful concession from us."

If it be insisted that science needs this idea of the "reign of law" for its further progress, let us candidly

consider what force this should have. It is true, that the notion of "laws of Nature" and its various expressions, now runs through scientific language and even popular use. For this last reason it has become almost impossible to make one's self understood in any discussion without using those terms. But if the essential idea be false, that is only another instance of how dangerous a falsehood it is, and of the urgent necessity of correcting it. To decide that it was true merely because it appears so much in our current language, would be, after all that has been shown in disproof, very irrational.

However, it is another argument in behalf of the "reign of law," and deserves an answer, if it be alleged that this theory being dismissed, the progress of scientific investigation would cease.

Now as far as concerns the term "law," some of the chief discoverers in science always protested that in speaking of "laws of Nature," they meant only "general facts," and that this conception was sufficient for their researches. Others of them have gone yet further, expressing regret that the term had gained such vogue, and apprehensions of its irreligious tendency if not always fully explained in their sense. If these could persist and could succeed in scientific pursuits without the idea objected to,* why might not all others now and hereafter?

But some one may say that "even these must of necessity have really, if unconsciously, maintained

* But would they not have done better yet to discard the needless and even misleading phraseology?

in their thoughts (though from some prejudices or mistaken alarm about its bearing upon religion they disclaimed it,) the idea of a 'reign of law'; of an unbroken and irrefragable chain of all causes and effects, from the beginning of the present order (if it ever had a beginning,) an actual force and mechanism including all the 'Cosmos' and excluding any interfering will, only upon the certainty of which 'law' could they proceed to extend the knowledge of mankind by observing more phenomena, making experiments and discovering new 'laws,' really old as the universe, but new to the delighted vision of investigating man."

Now this may be the form in which some minds still adhere to the notion which we have already so fully tried by the Word of God and our best reason. And as so stated it is a mere begging of the question. For what right have any to assume, without specific reasons given, that Newton must have been supremely governed in all his discoveries by a belief which he disclaims? But allowing for a prepossession to this effect, let us confront it with the following facts and reasons.

1st. It is certain that a considerable part of science was gained without the theory of a "reign of law." Take for an instance of this the great period of discovery from Copernicus to Newton. Indeed, the theory is rather claimed as itself one of the last and greatest achievements of science.* If it be the architrave of that edifice, it cannot be the founda-

* G. C. Lewes, Aristotle, &c.

tion stone. Why should I insist upon it against the express denials of men of such thought and truth, that this notion was with them the unconscious instinct of the investigating mind, without which it could not love and achieve knowledge? It has been already in these pages, upon other and sufficient grounds, shown to be a false notion. It is a monstrous thought then that truth can be only sought and gained by man upon the instinct of a false notion. Why, indeed, may he not seek out the works of God in all of true science while believing them to be simply and immediately *the works of God*? Because he cannot then have any thought of them as in a usual order and *almost* invariable succession? This misapprehension has been already exposed.

But let us bring it to trial by a fact. I, for instance, do not believe in a "reign of law." But I do believe that God causes all existence, motion and life in every successive instant by His loving will; that by that loving will He does this in an *order*, in ten thousand times ten thousand curious relations, which I can see and investigate; that so by His love we may have forethought and enjoy the ingenuity of discovery; increase our pleasures, relieve our pains and cares, and those of our fellow-men; be patient and hopeful, and grow in wondering adoration of Him. Why, then, might I not, if other things favored, devote myself with patient and hopeful ardor, going on from the present point of science, like Mr. Tyndall, to a further knowledge of *light*, or of birds, like a Duke of Argyll? I have every rational and innocent stimulus which they have in the love of knowledge and the emulation

of a glorious history. My security that the *Cosmos*, so far explored, extends far into the yet unknown, is at least as great in my faith of a gracious Reign of God, as their sin the notion of a "reign of law."

But we should do injustice to the supreme and transcendent truth to subject it to this condition. It would be folly to surrender that truth if, and because, we could not see how, in accord with it, human science could advance. At the most this would only prove that man's thought and language were so imperfect that they could no longer be employed in the direction of scientific research, without a false notion which would degrade our souls much more than any knowledge of animals or of plants could ennoble them. It might be then that we could not any longer increase our store of such facts or widen our view over them with further generalizations, unless we darkened our spiritual vision of the One Only and True. If the spokesmen of science can show these to be the alternatives, then the choice will soon be made by the lovers of real truth. For themselves and for all their brothermen (including those who would deride them for it), they would say, Let us never have another "discovery"; let us even, if that were possible and necessary, go back to know no more of all this than did Abraham or Job, St. John or St. Paul, rather than in the least dim the glorious vision of God in His Word, His Church, and "the sure and certain hope" of another life near at hand, when we are to live in His presence and know all that can delight and exalt the soul of man.

CHAPTER XV.

THE QUESTION BETWEEN THESE TWO IDEAS TRIED BY
THEIR MORAL AND SPIRITUAL EFFECTS.

IF we could even suppose that the result of our investigation so far is only to make it *doubtful* which of the two is the true idea, or to leave it at last a matter of consequences and expediency which to choose, there still remains that great question of probable truth, Which of them is the more for the welfare of mankind, and will best promote the goodness of God to man? This enquiry will certainly show whether our main question may be dismissed as not of practical importance. It is true enough that, as Bacon says, the pursuit of "final causes," that is, conjectures *why* things are as they are, is rather misleading in the investigation of physical facts. But in this higher question of the love of God in all His works, to omit these great spiritual facts would be feebleness and folly itself. As we know that God is love, more certainly than we know the magnitude and motion of our earth, so we know that no belief is true which does not accord with that love. Therefore, as between the two theories of the Universe now before us, that is the true one to hold which best promotes the spiritual good of mankind as God declares it in His Gospel.

What a man needs most to avoid and to oppose within himself is self-conceit, selfishness, worldliness and blindness to spiritual and Divine things. What he needs most to acquire and increase is humility, penitence, self-denial, faith in God, and obedient love of Him "with all the heart" and unselfish love to his fellow-men. Of the two it is the easy thing and suits the self-indulgent and unspiritual temper, to believe that everything moves around us in mechanical order, and so to be prudent and industrious (and investigating?) for ourselves, and exact in our judgment of others who, from ignorance or negligence, "violate the laws of Nature." But it needs every lofty motive, and every frequent reminder of our weakness, and the constant vision of Divine things by faith, and spiritual grace and salvation given, to keep one a good Christian. So God, in His Holy Word and Church, reminds us continually that this self-abasement and unlimited loving faith in Him are the real necessities and the glory of our life. He promotes humility and faith among men, not only by direct precepts, but by providing them with all "means of grace." Does He not bestow the other blessings of life and all its true knowledge with the same purpose and effect? Is it not best for us to receive them so?

The man who sees the immediate act of God in all things, as compared with one who has the mechanical idea of Providence, is reminded of Him by every innocent desire. That desire becomes at once a loving prayer, which employs the words of an ador-

ing poet of old, "Thou art *my* God." This worship does not need the process of

"looking through *Nature* up to *Nature's* God,"

which sounds so well in the modern poet's verse, but which is in method so remote, and in the practice of those who talk about it so infrequent. He need look *through* nothing. "He hath set *God* always *before him*." The precepts and the promises about prayer in Holy Writ are in natural accord with his usual thoughts, and do not need to be emptied of all their Divine warmth and color in adjustment to a "reign of law." This gives him peace, joy and hope that are indescribable. Yet the same sense of immediate and incessant dependence upon Him who is "All in All," teaches the deepest humility. It proclaims the greatness of God as nothing else can. No dim mist of "Nature" obscures, or, as rather is its tendency, quite shuts off the glorious vision. The infinite multitude and minuteness of His doings, so far from suggesting to this man that it is not the Good One in person who does all, only makes it the plainer to him that it is He "with Whom we have to do" directly in all.

But even more does it disclose His glorious presence in that which is, if we may without irreverence so express ourselves, God more essentially than anything else—His *love*. There is a reality and warmth and power, (which must be greatly lessened to our apprehension by any agents or mechanism interposed,) in acts of grace all alike—little and great,

natural or supernatural, bodily or spiritual—done in person. You may to your mind correctly argue and unanswerably demonstrate that this *should* not be my thought; but nevertheless it will be so. You may "prove" that the pleasant food which I now enjoy (and for which, perhaps, when I saw no natural means of getting my daily bread, I earnestly prayed), would come to me as much by the love of God if it were the result of a vast and inconceivably complicated set of forces, put in motion six thousand years ago, to give to each of millions of millions of creatures its thousands of supplies, as if He had attended in person to my recent needs and cries; but I shall not believe it.

I *cannot* then, when I adore Him, take up His own words and say, "Thou openest Thy hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness." No; a mechanical provision for my wants, by a "reign of law," is not the same thing as Divine "loving-kindness and tender mercy," and my feeling about this is a more direct apprehension of the truth than your reasoning. That notion of Divine Providence through "laws of Nature," casts a chilly shade of doubt and unreality over all those affecting and inspiring sayings of God's Word about His hearing the cries and supplying the wants of each one that calls upon Him. It is thus not only untrue, but the most mischievous untruth, as it defeats the very purpose of God's love, in *so revealing* His love and grace as to make us humble and believing and unworldly; steadfast and happy in spite of any cares or extremities, and full of grateful love to Him.

In truth, the love of God is the great solution of all these questions. The *why* of all things is thus absolutely known to us. Final causes are not barren puzzles in such investigations as ours. There is *one* great and certain purpose in all that is: a most glorious and magnificent Person does it all in love, which includes the fact that all the creatures which He has made sensitive should have enjoyment, and all those in His own image in the capacity of loving, should have their greatest enjoyment in that, the greatest exercise of it being toward Him. So, as was pointed out early in this investigation, to attempt it with the exclusion of this greatest fact, as misleading from the "dry light"* of pure reason, is a search for truth upon condition of avoiding truth. Cold reasoning is in this, false reasoning.

We may, by our artificial media, separate the heating and illuminating rays of the sun. But no such process is possible for the light of the Sun Eternal. It is the same one indivisible emanation, of which there can be no analysis, which gives us our life, shows us truth, makes us happy now, and restores and augments our lost heavenly future. Only in that light may we see light on this great question. The love of God alone accounts for His *doing*, as He "alone doeth great wonders," as well of the usual order we call "Nature," as of miracles. It alone accounts for His revealing them to us. It alone is the method and form of all. It is the supreme, the everlasting, the sole *purpose* of it all.

* Such a *lumen siccum* is *ignis fatuus*.

To investigate the general truths of "Nature" and Providence, then, upon the method of excluding the consideration of the love of God as irrelevant and a matter not of truth but of sentiment, is as if one should begin the study of astronomy by excluding every fact about the stars. This is why all philosophy when it has handled these matters, has been so feeble, so confused, and so barren of results.*

Some of the Christian writers do indeed expatiate upon what they call "evidences of benevolent design." But this is very weak and cold, and so different from what God Himself tells us of His love, that it is no wonder it has had so little power to convince and command the minds of men. So far as it gives any distinct idea of the One Who is All in All, it is of a huge human intelligence which amuses itself with an easy, tepid good nature in kindly ingenuities. This does not correspond to the powerful truth in Holy Scripture.

As the belief that God does all things immediately, continually reminds us of His love, and promotes love of Him, while the notion of a "reign of law" has the contrary effect, so also does the former "teach us to pray," while the other discourages prayer. This duty, as our religion presents it to us in Holy Writ and in all its other institutions, is asking of God what we desire and He has to give. We have but to consider in what things we are His "needy creatures," and the particulars of our prayers

* See Appendix A on *Metaphysics*.—If philosophy is to be a seeking of truth, it must either avoid all spiritual matters, or in them distinctly subject itself to true religion as the highest authority for such truth.

present themselves. The wants of physical life, the escape from its fears and dangers, the relief of pains and griefs, the moral dangers of this world, the perils and the hopes of what is "after death."

Now, according to the "reign of law," at least almost all of these things are disposed with mechanical precision, so that our prayers have no sort of effect upon them. We can affect this only as we obey or disobey such "laws of Nature" as we know, but they will occur no differently for any words or thoughts which we address to God. I scarcely know whether any one will seriously contend that I am as *likely* to pray for these things (which is the question before us now), with that belief, as if I looked for them to the gracious will of God without a notion of "the reign of law." * I am sure that *I* could not.

There are elaborate (and as the writers are ingenious men, we must suppose them ingenious) arguments in books to prove that our prayers are themselves a part of the machine of "laws." But I can find no force of truth in these reasonings. I *can* see that if one submits to the assumption of a "reign of law," there arises a sort of religious necessity to construct some such argument. But I have no need of it, for I do not allow that false assumption; its absurdity, even in this one instance, should make one reject it.

Certain Christian writers resolved to find some-

* Imagine my applying to the proprietor of our leading newspaper as it was rolling out from the great power press to have a paragraph of mine appear in those very columns.

thing religious in that theory, and hardly able to deny its repugnance to prayer, have said that it promotes the *praise* of God. They aver that science enlarges our knowledge of God's works, that we now know of the vast magnitudes and multitude of heavenly bodies and their all but infinite distances and movements; of the almost infinite minuteness which the patient studies of naturalists with the microscope, and chemists with the spectroscope, reveal; so that we may behold much more of the greatness of God, and adore Him more. Is this last so in fact? Is our age one that worships as no former generation ever did? and do we find most of this deep religion in those who know most of the science?

Doubtless all such true knowledge may be and should be used to glorify the Great and Ever Blessed God. But the coldness of devotion in many chief men of science, and the contemptuous indifference and doubt, even plain atheism of many others of them, is a terrible set-off to the supposed gain in the right direction. Nor even is that the worst of it. It is a fair statement of the fact that the prevailing fashion among those most famous and successful in these pursuits is to treat all thought of God and Divine things as the "unknowable." Is knowledge gained by the suppression of religious thought, upon the whole a gain to religion?

Thus this very increase of knowledge of stars, plants, and animal life, if pursued as a science founded upon the "reign of law," so far from making men love and praise God, is, in the main, of an irre-

ligious tendency. A man who knows no more of these things than David the King of Israel did, will be moved by what he does see to praise God, far more than one whose greatly enlarged knowledge of what the Maker has done, has been gained by ascribing all to some imagined power or mechanism which he calls "Nature." If he will renounce that fiction and agree with me in seeing the will and act of God in everything, we can always join in the anthem, "All Thy works praise Thee!"

Another part of our religion is to believe the marvellous things which God has done, *out of* that usual order which we call "nature." The notion of a "reign of law" opposes this faith as it does prayer and praise. Many incidental illustrations of this have already occurred in the course of this investigation. We have then the same necessity of our Christian men of science, and the same attempt on their part to construct a theory by which miracles accord with the "reign of law." And we have the same failure in it. Why does not the real resolution of this difficulty occur to them? Like other great truths, its very simplicity and obviousness baffle some ingenious minds. The notion of a "reign of law" cannot be adjusted to that greatest truth, the Gospel of God, because it is not true itself.

But before we make a final scrutiny of what is said of the Divine miracles being "interpositions" in laws of Nature and the like, let us observe the bearing upon the whole question of certain other works and gifts of God for which we call upon Him by

prayer, and which no one supposes to come by, or according to, those "laws." Men either disbelieve entirely in the spiritual blessings as needful to every soul, such as repentance,* a "new heart" "renewed day by day," peace of soul, consolation in trouble, &c., or they agree that these come direct "from above." Nor are they thought to be miraculous and extraordinary interpositions in the "reign of law." They are too frequent for this, even incessant and normal according to the *spiritual order*. Yet it is impossible to separate them from "natural" events. The latter are often by our experience among the means by which God gives us the former, and they are often so related in the Divine history. Thus the stumbling of a horse in a rough roadway may bring a man to hear the very words which will bring him to embrace Our Lord's salvation. Or a child's death, which did not occur at all supernaturally, may change the whole spiritual life of its mother, or a desolate heart be filled with joy and thankfulness to God by some event in the ordinary course of things, but which we call with truth a "good Providence."

Here is a vast complex of direct acts of God, not only equally numerous and normal with the others, but while parallel with them, having innumerable reciprocal dependences and connections. They occur upon the occasion of human prayers, with all the irregularity in time and inconsistencies in desire of millions of men's wills; (or if we could leave these

* "Then hath God, &c., granted repentance," &c.—Acts xi. 18.

prayers out of account, according to the spiritual needs of men immeasurably varied by their desires and acts). It is then impossible that the other set of events should occur in an invariable mechanical order. But if such "laws of Nature" are always set aside for these incessant spiritual purposes, the last idea of "law" in them has disappeared; it is not clear which is the "law" and which the "interference." The scientific man would tell you that there was nothing worth contending for as "law" in such a case.

The "reign of law" once conceded, the common device for maintaining faith in the Divine miracles, is to say that God "reserved to Himself a power to interpose" in some rare cases in the inexorable action of "law." I was never able to satisfy myself with this even when the true solution of the difficulty had not occurred to me. I did not find it in Holy Scripture, nor anything suggesting, equivalent or corresponding to it. I had a painful feeling that it violated my highest and, therefore, truest apprehension of God. Was this an instinct of truth or a false prejudice? Let us try this by our best reason.*

To "interpose" is to come between two or more objects, or place something else between them. If we use such terms of the acts of God, it must be by analogy to what a man can do. Thus one of us can interpose a shield between another man and a flying missile, or he can interpose between two combatants,

*In what will be said of "interposition" are included all other expressions which are used to express the same substantial theory of Divine miracles along with "laws of Nature," such as "interference" with, or "suspension" or "violation" of, these "laws."

or in any contest of others. But certainly the occasion of this must be something outside of himself. We should all smile at the absurdity of saying that a man interposed in what *he* was doing in person. So when we apply these terms to what God does, we should with reasonable care consider how far they can represent what is Divine. When He uses words to tell us of Himself, then of course they come the nearest possible to complete truth that our poor speech and intelligence allow of. But when we employ them to relieve our difficulties of thought about Him, we cannot be too cautious lest we transfer what describes human weakness to the conception of the Almighty One.

In what true sense then does God "interpose," when instead of, as in His usual order of power, causing water to continue where water was, His will is that there should be wine in place of it? No more than a man interposes in his own actions when, having a usual practice of sending water to his sick and needy neighbor, he chooses to send him wine instead. If we seek for something analogous in human action to represent the supposed case as to God's miracles, that ages before them the whole area of being and life was filled up with unvarying "laws," while the very idea of a miracle is of something which does not occur according to those "laws"; it would be the case of a man's having made an all but perfect machine with a complete foresight of all its future working. Would we ever speak of his "interposing," even less of his "having

reserved to Himself the power to interpose" in this working, for other purposes equally foreseen by Him from the very first? All these analogies do, indeed, fail, but in the opposite direction, from curing the absurdity of this theory of power reserved by God to interfere in His own will and work. A man is always surrounded by force entirely outside of himself or his will. His very best contrivances are but the partial adjustment and use of what is being done by Another's will. His best forethought of what is to be and what he will yet wish, is but weak conjecture. Nothing occurs to God but what is His own will, and always perfectly foreknown to Him.

This gratuitous and awkward fiction would never have been invented but for the embarrassment of their faith, which Christians have brought upon themselves with the false notion of "laws of Nature." One late writer even maintains this upon the ground that the immediate will of God in all things would deny His "immutability." After much pondering I am unable to find any truth or even meaning in this. Is the "immutability" immovability? There seems to lurk here unconsciously a mistake about God which would deny His person and will, make Him less than a mere mechanism, only the machine itself; which tends to the religion of a dumb idol, and even to atheism at last. "Immutability," as we little creatures can define it of the Eternal and Infinite One, is only as He pleases to tell us that *His* goodness and truth, unlike the best of men's, cannot change so as to disappoint our faith in Him. This

has nothing to do with the notion that some thousands of years ago He made a great machine of this *Cosmos*, and then left it to run perfectly and irresistibly by its own force, except as He might approach it upon some very rare occasions, to "interpose" in it with miracles. The true *unchangeableness** of God may, indeed, make me happy, as I see that He *is doing* everything now in person, and that He will do all with the same love and truth forever. It is not merciless and voiceless mechanism miscalled "law," nor absurd "interposition."

But were there any force in this argument of "immutability," it would exclude "interposition." That would be precisely mutability. Let us return to real first principles. The Maker of all existed without and before all else. Whatever natures or necessities they have, are such because He chose to make them such.† In this will of Creation He saw all that was to be (that has been and yet will be). A mechanism constructed with a reserved power to interpose in it upon special occasions could only be in anticipation of some emergency not then foreseen. Otherwise the Almighty constructor would make those occasions a part of the original design and future working. Whatever reason is alleged for the mechanism at all, is as true of such perfect construction of it by Him to whom all things are alike easy and all perpetually present. So some of

* That is a better word than *immutability*, which is never said of God Himself in His Word. Indeed, the word only occurs in our English Bible in regard to His spiritual grace and purposes.

† See Appendix G as to the false notion prevailing about "eternal principles" and Conscience. Also Chapter XVII. on "Law."

these apologists begin to see ; and now they retreat from the new difficulty, to the position that all which is miraculous and spiritual in our religion is a part of this invariable "law."* But this is, if possible, more untrue than the other. It is contrary to all the plain language of God's Word, and to the nature of a free will such as He has given to each of us, and to His own freedom, as the Infinite and Most Glorious Idea of a person and will.

Thus it is a powerful suggestion to every one who loves God and believes Him in the Gospel, that the present Reign of God and not a "reign of law" is the truth, in that the former promotes while the latter discourages humility, prayer, faith in His Word, and love.

* See "Reign of Law" by Duke of Argyll, &c.

CHAPTER XVI.

"SPECIAL PROVIDENCES."

ONE sometimes hears well-intending Christian people say, "Do you believe in special Providences?" Is this a real doubt whether God takes any notice of us as individuals; "of our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking," although He says to us, "*Ask and ye shall receive*"? If so, this doubt must come from a false notion that some *supra-deical* power limits His promise. What can that power be? The Divine Will Itself, bound by itself at Creation *not* to do other than what would occur whether men asked it of God or no? To say nothing of this absurdity (as exposed already) of law self-imposed upon God's Will, it is impossible* that He thus abridges His own grace, since He has commanded us to believe in it.

And what does any man mean by "special Providence"? The Divine Providence cannot but be "special" in the just sense that God knows each of us personally in all that affects our life, and that He provides for it with this complete knowledge, with unlimited power, and with infinite love. If we will not believe this because we think that individual persons (unless they are very important or representative ones), may be (or *must* be?) overlooked in the

* This we can say without presumption, "for it is impossible for God to lie."

very great number of them ; or that the business of this Providence is so vast and complicated that, as in the best human administrations, classes only can be attended to and individual interests must often suffer ; then, though we *speak* of "God," we are thinking, not of the True Infinite and Most Glorious One, but of some fiction of our minds under that name.

The true God says : "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world" [Acts xv. 18]. "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him and delivered him out of all his distress." [Ps. xxxiv. 6]. "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father; but the very hairs of your head are all numbered" [St. Matt. x. 29, 30]. Is the Sermon on the Mount with the same assertion running through it all, the Word of God to us, or no? Indeed, if we do not see Holy Scripture full of His notice of persons, and especially of His gracious attention to the prayers of whosoever calls upon Him, be it even the captive in the dungeon or a little child, then it is not the real Word of God to us ; we are obscuring its illumination of our souls in all other matters as well as this, and promoting unbelief among other men. These Divine sayings agree only with a true thought of One to Whose knowledge, power, will, and attentive love, there is absolutely no limit, and Who can as easily see and do a million things in a moment as one. So far then as we regard an infinite minuteness and multi-

tude of objects in immediate Providence, it is only impossible for this to be impossible to God.

Probably the honest Christian would say at last: "I do not mean to doubt what God says. To think as you do, is, indeed, most consoling and elevating; and it makes all the Bible real and true to me. But tell me, *can* we think that God would derange all this vast order to grant one of my requests? Would it not bring into what is so nicely balanced and adjusted a confusion which could not be remedied? And then if I can be thus gratified, so must thousands of thousands of others; and all harmony of Nature and forethought of man will be at an end. Does He not any way do all things well, having so foreseen and devised everything from the beginning? Does He not expect us simply with faith in the general good to submit to this and make the best of it for that general good in which we have our fair part?"

Why then, I reply, did He tell you to pray, and that with an express assurance that He would do as you asked? (We may dismiss, without a direct notice, the monstrous answer sometimes given to this question by Christian writers who attempt philosophy where philosophy has no business; an answer which never did and never ought to satisfy a single soul, viz.: that it was to make our souls tranquil and pious, though He has no intention of doing anything more or less whether we pray or not.) Any faith in God shows us that His requiring and granting our prayers and telling us in His Word that He does so,

proves that our doubting questions are mistakes and infirmities of our own minds. If, then, these doubts come immediately from a notion that Divine Providence is a great machine of causes and effects, this shows that notion to be false. Let us retire upon this solid rock of truth, that God can and will do all that He says He will. Let what must be dismissed from the mind be, not that faith, but the notion which contradicts it.

Suppose, as an example, that last week you set out at nightfall of a winter's day upon a journey of many hours by rail; that before going to sleep in the "palace-car" you prayed God for a safe journey; that just before the break of day you were awakened by a dreadful sound and violent motion, whereupon you called upon God for deliverance from sudden and great danger. In a few seconds all was still; but you and your fellow-travellers found yourselves upon the floor of the car, which lay in a steep incline. You were all (including a worldly and profane man whose place was next yours), safe, except as there lay a little way off the crushed and lifeless body of an excellent woman, whose life had seemed invaluable to her family and to God's Church where she belonged to it. As daylight came and you could see what had happened, it appeared that a broken rail had thrown the whole train violently down a steep bank; that the car in front of yours had rolled over several times in the descent, killing or maiming every one within it, but that a little tree had caught the corner of yours before it had turned over once, and thus saved life

and limb for every one within it but the unfortunate lady.

(I must confine myself to but one incident of this illustration, and not apply the true principle to the two cases of the good woman or the worldly man. True faith in God according to His own words to us has its sufficient answer to the cavils which are raised about such cases, as well as that directly pursued here. It must be sufficient here to say that the common notion which has been followed above in calling one who has suddenly "died in the Lord," *unfortunate*, is all wrong. Those who lament then may be unfortunate; they are certainly blessed; while we are to be sure that their cases as well as those of the selfish and impious who escape great perils, are according to the perfect justice and goodness of God.)

What would you think and say in such a case? As you believe in God, and in proportion as you do, your first thought would be: "Thanks be to God Who heard my prayer for safety last night, Who heard my cry for succor this morning, and saved me with a great deliverance!" But would this be right? or would it be a delusion, irrational and superstitious? Ought you to correct it by the reflection that the rail was broken by the uniform "laws of Nature," in the structure of the iron according to its original ore and its actual manufacture, with the great cold of the season? That this dangerous rail was just at this dangerous embankment; that you were travelling then and there; that the little tree

was growing just where it was; that at the fatal moment your car was just where it was (the matter of a second of time determined by the fireman having opened the furnace door a little before at one moment rather than another); that you were there instead of in the seat occupied by the person who was injured; that all this was determined by invariable "laws of Nature," so that you would be alive and unhurt now whether you had prayed or not; so that God did *not* look upon you at that moment with grace and save you? that, therefore, your gratitude and adoration are absurd?

At which time were you really most wise? and did you see things as they really are? When you thought of God with awe and love? or when you were philosophically ungrateful?

We may now apply with all and more than its force in such uses, the very principle of all supposed demonstration of "laws of Nature": that whatever general proposition accounts for, and agrees with, all the "known facts" is true. Whatever things are true about our higher nature and our spiritual and immortal welfare, are at least as much *facts* as anything about rocks and fossils. Among such facts of the highest order are these, that "men ought always to pray," and that they are free to choose good or evil. Now it has been plainly shown that the theory of a "reign of law" is in utter discord with these facts. How can I then rationally assent to it? How can I do otherwise in adherence to truth than reject it?

I know that some persons follow another method, of being satisfied with a supposed accord of "the reign of law" with all physical facts; and then either pass over the others without notice, or assume that the discord is only in appearance, and hunt for the clue to some yet undiscovered truth which is to harmonize all, or are so bent upon absolute assertion of the theory that they profess themselves fully satisfied with notions of prayer and free-will which contradict all my reason. But why is not mine the true "scientific" method, of rejecting the "reign of law" because it does *not* agree with the chief facts? Of course then if any future discoveries remove the discrepancy, the way will be, so far forth, clear for reasonable assent. But pending them, such assent is not reasonable.

CHAPTER XVII.

LAW.

WHEN writers use the term "laws of Nature" and the like, some even now admit as most formerly distinctly defined, that these are in no sense really *laws*, but the convenient statement of a general fact. And why then am I not content with this? Some of my devout friends have even said, "You and these Christian writers who maintain 'the reign of law' really mean the same thing, and it is but a question of words." I should be glad to think so, and especially to believe that such use of the term law is harmless and proper. But I cannot; for, as I think, besides what to this effect has been already proved, I shall now be able to show to all fair-minded persons that there is a false principle and an evil tendency of thought and life involved in all this use of the term "law" in regard to mechanical and physical things.

But first let me invert the question above and ask my interrogators, Why then do you insist upon speaking of "laws" which you say yourselves are not really laws, and when these phrases, as has even been already shown, have such false uses and evil tendencies, or at least of which some of your fellow Christians have such fears? Is this "required of God in Holy Scripture"? No one will say that. On the contrary, we have already seen that it is not

according to that Word of God, "but rather repugnant thereto." Why not then cancel it from all our expressions? If this deprives us of a brief and convenient phrase in ordinary language or scientific research, that is little compared with the least deviation from truth. It will really save some words; for then we will not need these frequent apologies and protestations as to what we do *not* mean by "law." Then also it is agreed by all careful thinkers that one of the chief causes of false reasoning is the use of words with two or more different senses. Anyway, with you, it is only a question of words; with us it is one of supreme principle.

LAW, in its primary and necessary meaning, implies that a superior, rightful authority imposes its will upon its subjects. It needs two free personal wills: the one commanding, the other choosing to obey: a Person or persons giving law, a person or persons who should obey it, but whose action would not be obedience unless they were also free to disobey at the peril of wickedness and punishment. It is so with "the powers that be" in human law.* If in speaking of obedience to God we were only making the best possible attempt to express Divine things in human language, using those terms of our own action which came nearest to them, we should call His commands "laws."

But probably the truth lies deeper than this. As man's first conception of a *person* was not of himself, but of his Eternal Lord, so his first thought of law

* "Law is the expression of legislative will."—Code of Louisiana.

was of the commands of that Person. Then we properly apply this to all rightful authority which He appoints and delegates to some of us over others, and especially to the rules enacted by legislatures, and executed by magistrates, for the peace and safety of nations. Only with this accords what He says in many sentences of His Written Word; as for instance: "There is no power but of God": "There is One Lawgiver."

But as we look above ourselves for this true idea of law, and find it in the Word of God, we see that it is not the will of mere power ("arbitrary"—as men say)—nor of supreme power with mere justice (as the very highest analogy of human law suggests), but that law belongs to that most glorious Divine mystery of the love of God. It is by this love that He has made certain things right and just for men. He has made these laws of love for us, that we may do His will perfectly and happily by loving Him and our fellow-creatures. This truth is as simple as a little child's mind, and at the same time as profound as the Divine Eternity: deeper than all the thoughts of all our sages.

Now, nothing can be more against this supreme law of love than forgetfulness, doubts, and even denials that God is a Person.* Some men seem to

*This term is used with entire faith in that great mystery of the "Holy, Blessed and glorious Trinity—three Persons and one God." It is from the poverty of human speech to express such truth, that "person" must be used in different senses. Here it is necessary to declare that God is the One who is all that we can ever suppose of a person, of which other persons are only partial instances, as opposed to the sort of atheism called "pantheism," which uses the Divine name without its meaning.

achieve the same baleful result by the intellectual perversity of denying that we of mankind are persons, that we have a real knowledge and will of choice of good rather than evil. This overthrows the law of God; for persons only, and not merely helpless

—"parts of one stupendous whole,"

can love and obey Him. But this doubt or denial of our own personality is an even less insane (or unsound) exercise of thought and wicked will, than to destroy the possibility of our loving God by denying "that He is."* It is mere self-deception in any man to persuade himself that any toleration of the word God saves the man who says there is no such *Person*, from being an atheist. We can only love a Person. Try it but once. "Thou shalt love with all thy heart," etc. — "the All"? the "soul of the world"? — the sum-total of all matter and motion, which is not a person? It is absurd. It is profane. So even short of this miserable atheism, any doubt that God is the Absolute Person, or any cold inattention to that truth, is, in proportion, against the law of love.

It is a fact that while the Word of God in His Book and Church expresses this truth of Him as a Person with wonderful simplicity and power, and so all Christendom is still penetrated with it, this influence is opposed by the idea of Natural law in various

* "He that cometh unto God must believe that He is"—i. e. that He is what He is essentially. The pantheistic *word* is nothing. The hatred of modern atheists is against "a personal God."

shades of opinions. Thus some who are at the very head of "Science" now, state it just as Spinoza did two hundred years ago: "The laws of Nature are the only realization of the Divine Will: if anything in Nature would happen to contradict them, God would contradict Himself." Others say, as Leibnitz did, that while God in Creation disposed the parts of "Nature" "in such a manner that they are able of themselves to execute their functions and maintain their activity," He still reserved a power of extraordinary interference. Others admit that it is going too far to assert such automatic mechanical "forces"; that God does indeed do everything, but that the "laws of Nature" are such as He in Creation "bound Himself" by, in what He was yet to do. While others yet, as though no man dare reject the term itself, yet shrinking from the presumption of this last assertion as well as those other deviations from the true faith of God, say they only mean by "laws of Nature," the general facts which are so far discovered by human science, or supposed to be.

Let us carefully observe the necessary effect of any of this use of the term "law" upon the obedience of real law, that is, true religion and virtue. The demonstration which has been already made of "the reign of God" in all things, that all existence, force, motion and life is always simply His immediate will, has prepared for a true conception of the tendency of these terms "laws of Nature" and the like. Thus then we know of "Nature," that in the beginning God created all. This was the first of all

substance, force or life other than Himself. So also everything continues to be what it is and to do what it does because He wills so. If it only cease to be His positive will that it should exist, by that it ceases to be. The real existence, the real force of anything is His will. Strictly speaking, we cannot call anything else force; as *e. g.* to say that a stone falls by the force of gravity. The real cause and force is the Will of God that this should take place, which if it should cease (*e. g.*, if we could suppose such a thing, by His mere inattention to matter) all that we call force of gravitation would instantly cease. Gravitation then is a result, not a cause; an effect, not a force.

So far then as we think and speak correctly, we mean by this and like expressions the observed fact that *e. g.* all parts of matter tend toward one another, whether this describe the movements of stars in curves of a thousand millions of miles, or those of a tear rolling down a cheek.* But we may have a wrong notion that the "law" or "force of gravitation" is an existing power, which with energy, extent, and infinite minuteness too, all not less than Divine, of itself does innumerable "great wonders." In that case we probably suppose this to have *begun* with the Creation, and so by the will of God. But we suppose it after that to have force in itself ("a certain independence," as Christlieb says,) which will continue indefinitely, unless the Creator puts a stop to it. This, indeed, is the notion in its

*I cite purposely this celebrated illustration of a "law of Nature."

least irreligious form, which prevails and grows by the use of such terms as "laws of Nature."

But even this tends to make men doubt, or at least forget that God is the Great Person. All attention and admiration is engrossed in "Nature." Power is only noticed in the vast "forces" which are supposed to do such great wonders. Even what is suggested to the dullest minds, of Divine authority and majesty, as when "thunders utter their voices," is transferred to a vague fiction called "Nature" or "Law." Thus is defeated that purpose of Divine love that "the invisible things of Him" should be "understood by the things that are made, *even His eternal power and Godhead.*" They are made the very means of forgetting and even denying that there is that *Person*—the very truth of "*His Eternal Power and Godhead.*"

We have already seen that this loss of vision of God as a Person is the greatest calamity that can befall men. Law and life for us in our very nature as created by Him in love, consist first in a personal love for Him, which makes it our greatest desire to do all His will. Thus His law becomes our will, that will is gratified and we are happy. A part of that Divine law and will is that we should love our fellow-men, being just and kind to each of them according to the "Golden Rule" of Our Lord and Saviour. For this reason nothing worse could befall us than to lose sight of the Glorious Person of God, even if every one was in obedience to this law of love, as innocent as the first man was made.

But it is yet worse for us who have all lost that perfect nature made "in the image of God." And our duty of love to God is even increased by that "great mystery of Godliness": that He has so loved this lost world as to make a Redemption of all who will repent and return to Him; that God the Son has come to this world in person for this work and been a man among us. *Anything* which tends to keep sinful men from returning by this great salvation to the perfect love of God is a mistake and a misfortune of the worst kind.

Law, then, the true *law* of perfect love to God and man, must not be obscured by any wrong use of the term or degraded by other association. Especially those who begin with the dangers of a perverse and selfish self-will, and the dulness and blindness about divine and spiritual things, of a dreadful fall from natural innocence, cannot afford to do anything which shall aggravate such danger to their own souls, or, O even greater horror! shall put their fellow-men in such peril. Something more than the careless folly or even the perverse wickedness of men must be employed in this. Probably it is also among the cruel inventions of "that Wicked One."

This false use of the term *law* does mischief also in morals as well as in religion. It accustoms us to the thought of all law and duty as separate from will and choice; as of something only of cause and effect, not of right or wrong. For a man then to do some right thing is "obeying a law" in the sense in which it is commonly said that we ought to "obey the laws

of Nature" in order to have good health, that is, avoid certain acts merely because certain ill consequences follow them. Thus, one should "obey the laws of Nature" in not eating too much, since that will be followed by bad digestion; or in not being a drunkard, from the physical consequences of that; or even in not defrauding another man, since (to say nothing of the prisons of real law) it has the "natural penalty" of the ill-will and distrust of other men.

How different is this from the true idea of law as the will of God, to be obeyed from love to Him and in love to my neighbor as myself! How hostile to Divine law is all the tendency of this notion of "Natural law"! The one is essentially generous; the other, essentially selfish. Yet such is the secret and unnoticed advance of its influence, that it is becoming common for Christian writers and preachers to speak of the resemblance, and even identity of our duty with "laws of Nature," of the punishment of wrong-doing being merely the "natural result," and even of the awful wrath of God after death as being "according to a law of Nature."

In words which God uses to speak to man we shall also always find something more than what we call "questions of words," or the arbitrariness of mere human speech. In none such is this more true than in this very word "*law*" in all its uses and abuses. Thus, in our English language, "law of" always declares the authority which imposes the law and is to be obeyed. The "law of God" is what He

commands; the "law of man" is what is determined by human authority. The "laws of Nature" are—what? Is this "Nature" a lawgiver? And who are its subjects? Or does this great will make irresistible laws for its great complicated and all but infinite self? But though certainly there is no *will* of Nature, either to impose or to obey law, those who use the false words are forced by them into a false thought. Unconsciously they make mankind, and even God, the subjects of such law; and on the other hand, they imagine "Nature" something vast, forceful—scarcely less than infinite, eternal and almighty—at least having a lease of power for a thousand ages, which cannot be cancelled during that term, and a possession and dominion (with perhaps some small reserves of interposition for the real owner) which cannot be trespassed upon by *any one* while that title lasts. Thus the expression and notion of "laws of Nature," even in its most attenuated form, and as adjusted to arguments in behalf of Christian faith, forces us to think of God as limited by something outside of Himself. And while this is true even of the more thoughtful and devout, it promotes actual atheism in the more worldly and unspiritual.

This "question of words" is then one of the greatest questions of fact and of Divine truth. So is it also a matter of the most urgent practical effect "for the glory of God and the good of man's estate." No subject of our thoughts can more unite these two. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." God is the

supreme object of that love, and we glorify Him only by it. Law for man is the purpose of his existence, and to fulfil it includes all that is good for him. It does *not* say that to fulfil the law is love, that is, according to the weak and false paraphrase of our day, that to perform every precept of duty to our fellow-men (if that were possible) is equivalent to love, and is the real meaning of that as a figure of speech. It *does* say that all true law is His Will and Word; that its first and great commandment is to love Him supremely; that another part of His Will and Law is to love our fellow-men; that especially, having fallen from the happiness and honor of such love, we should long and labor by every means to regain this, and to replace our perverse and selfish self-will by a love to Him and our neighbor which makes it our greatest desire and pleasure to obey His commandments.

This is the true doctrine and practice of virtue and piety—really “one and inseparable.” It is sometimes falsely said that “duty” is the greatest word and thought, and is what has made the English race so true and powerful. Any such power for good which “duty” has had has been in that Divine truth, of which it is only a cold shadow. Shall we try to be wise above what *God* has written? The true sense of duty is of some one of the many rights, acts or relations which God has commanded within His law of love. All, and more, that the other word contains as a principle to direct or to animate us in doing right, is contained in the true law, which is

what God Himself has given us for our happiness and life in Him. To personify "duty" and make it the supreme principle of conduct, comes from that false notion of "eternal principles" of right and wrong which some Christian moralists patronize, which came from the Greek philosophers, and not only cannot be found in the New Testament, but is against all its doctrine, and tends really to atheism. He alone is "eternal." He is "the First and the Last." "*Of Him and to Him and through Him are all things.*" Whatever is good or true, is such because it is *His will*; not that these are His will because they are good or true. The most august and perfect actor of duty that ever lived on the earth, and even though He were God as well as man, has no other account of it all but "to *do the will* of Him that sent me." Thus, and only thus, is all true law Divine love.

The greatest intellectual (as well as spiritual) folly for a man is not to see God at all as a Person, for then he cannot love Him. The next is to *question* that greatest truth and say, "I doubt whether there be such a *person*; if there be, perhaps He is not personally 'knowable'; I will give all my thoughts to the great 'Nature' which I do know." Can such a man love God? But short of this, a man may so *forget* God by transferring to something which he calls "Nature" all that reminds us of His power and law, that it is almost as if there were "no God." If he does not at all repent and believe on Our Lord, you may say that this is any way the perverseness of

fallen man. How woful it is then that this evil will of his has been reinforced by that false notion of "law" and "Nature" to obscure the thought of God and his love! how terrible if we help to maintain such fatal delusions among our fellowmen! But even if such a man be an honest Christian, how much love of God and of his fellowmen is lost to him by the same false thought!

After this enquiry was completed it occurred to the author that some persons might still be confused by the notion that the Reign of God must be a "reign of law," because it is generally admitted among civilized men that the highest idea of civil society is that of "government by *law*" as opposed to "*personal* government." By reflecting upon the real principle of this we shall see what truth it suggests in the present enquiry.

Whence then comes the yearning for "paternal government" sometimes intelligently felt, among us who felicitate ourselves that ours is *not* such? It is very easy to dismiss this with an impatient rebuke as mere servile vanity, love of the "trappings" of power which are so much seen in monarchies, and the hope in that case to be of the small favored class at the expense of degradation for most of our countrymen. No doubt such wishes are sometimes indulged in among a free people. In any case we are not grateful and thoughtful enough about the blessings of equal laws and the self-government of our nation.

Yet, on the other hand, we may see how human

law will of course be imperfect in its application. That no forethought or experience of man can adjust general laws so that they will not work injustice in some cases that arise; that the distribution of power among many men will not seldom put it in the hands of ignorant, unjust or corrupt persons, yet greatly diminish the sense of shame or responsibility which is some check to this mischief. Those who observe these evils and think only of some remedy for them, may look with desire to the theory of personal government by one man, so sure of his authority as to be firm, and so conspicuous to public judgment that he dare not be corrupt, yet not disabled by technical law from doing substantial justice in each actual case.

On the other hand, if all power really rests with one who is noways amenable to the many, the consequences of his being a bad man are fearfully aggravated. Then also were he the wisest and most just in a great nation, he is altogether dependent for his knowledge of facts and for his actual execution of justice upon many thousands of other men, whom he cannot possibly know so as to choose them wisely to these ends. No doubt then we shall agree in general that it is a mistake to prefer a "personal government" among men to one "of law."

But when we "lift our eyes to Him Who dwelleth in the Heavens," all the conditions of this question are changed. He is the "one law-giver," source and eternal seat of *all* just authority. In the former case the "personal governor" is one of His imperfect and

perverse subjects exercising a little delegated power over others of them for Him ; one of His creatures who only began and continues to exist as He continues to wish this, directed to maintain for himself and some other men the social order of peace and justice which His love provides for all alike. True laws enforce men's duties to one another which belong with their relations. He is the maker of all the relations and all the laws. This government only continues rightly as His personal will to that effect continues. He is all truth, all power, all love. Therefore His personal government has no possible defect of justice, of ignorance of facts, of selfish self-will, of being the unconscious instrument of some one else's self-will. On the contrary, it includes a perfect, personal knowledge, and a just and impartial personal love of each one of His subjects.

Our free government is not "personal," because those who make and execute our laws are fellow-subjects of those laws with us. His government must be personal in that He is the sole necessary Supreme Person, Whose will is all law to all others, while He is subject to nothing. It is a government by law *for us*, in the sense that we have His *known* will given us as a law. And yet for us it is personal, in that "God dealeth with us as with sons"; not as though He were any way constrained by general laws made for classes of His subjects, which, as we sometimes say, must in some cases work hardship to individuals, but as dealing with such individual persons with most minute and exact notice of all par-

ticulars. As regards Himself, it is *in fact* the one only "paternal" government, represented to us by nothing else among men (and by that of necessity most imperfectly), than by the father of a family; a government in which the commanding will and personal love are one, and obedience and love in like unity required of the subjects. Among its first laws is this: "When ye pray, say, Our Father Who art in Heaven."

CHAPTER XVIII.

RESULTS COLLECTED.

LET us now collect the results of this whole investigation in one compact statement.

It has appeared that never before among English speaking people were religious doubts more common or so much diffused among all classes, especially younger persons; that these doubts are raised upon arguments from the "laws of Nature," and the generally received notion of all men of science, whether Christian or un-Christian, of a "reign of law"; and that the modern writers in behalf of faith all concede this notion, and argue only to show that in accordance with it we may yet believe in the Christian miracles, in prayer, and in God's Word; but that, however ingenious these arguments are, and even conclusive to those who do not need convincing, they do not remove the unbelief, or even check its advance.

I have undertaken to show that these arguments are unsuccessful simply because the supposed truth of a "reign of law" with which our religion must be reconciled, is no truth at all, but a gratuitous and irreligious fiction. That assumption has been demonstrated to be, not only not proved, but positively and mischievously untrue, and that to argue from it involves a surrender of the true grounds of

faith. I therefore entreat all Christians who read this, to reject that notion and all its atheistic corollaries together, and to show to others that they need not be disturbed in Christian faith by any arguments about "laws of Nature."

Here, indeed, we might rest until some *proof* of the assumption was yet presented; whatsoever has been heretofore taken for such proof having been examined, and having failed to stand the tests of truth. Indeed, such proof has scarcely ever been attempted. It has been merely taken for granted that there were such "laws of Nature" and their "reign." If this is still maintained by any one upon the impression of its being a self-evident truth, one of those statements upon which all men agree upon the first apprehension of them (as that the whole of anything is greater than any one of its parts), I may disprove that at once by the fact that one mind at least (my own), cannot after much reflection even conceive of its being true.*

Thus, being neither self-evident nor proved, it ought to be dismissed from all thought by that just principle which Sir William Hamilton calls "the law of parcimony, which forbids the multiplication without necessity of entities, powers, principles or causes." And so Christians, who know already the All-sufficient Power and Cause of all existence and

* Besides, if such self-evident truth, it is a great religious truth, and must have been known to mankind from the first ages, and certainly "in the fullness of time" appeared in all the Creeds and Liturgies of the Church, whereas (and this is a powerful argument against its being anyway credible by Christians) it is in none of these expressed or implied.

life in the Infinite Will, should not imagine, "without necessity," such "powers," &c., in "forces of Nature" and the like.

But the notion is so widely prevalent and so deeply rooted in all the language of our day, and is so injurious to men's faith in the Most Blessed God and to their love of Him, that I have advanced to the positive investigation of its merits by every test. In reviewing the results of this for our final judgment, let us all remember that in comparison with *truth* our former opinions or pride of opinion, or the authority of famous names, the honor of being called intelligent or the shame of being despised as narrow-minded and ignorant—all these are nothing,

There is one further proof which appears now for the first time, and only because the other proofs are collected. One of the foregoing arguments, indeed, that from the Word of God, far outweighs all the others, and is really decisive. But the Good One allows our weak intelligence the help of many others, and in their *consilience*,* furnishes another still to bind them into an irresistible demonstration. For when all the parts of an investigation point to one conclusion, the force of the united proof is not merely the amount of these several parts, but many times greater; so that reasonable doubt is excluded.

It was proved, 1, that the question whether there is a "reign of law," or whether we ought to believe that the immediate Will of God is the only real

* Or "leaping together." It is the name which Prof. Whewell gives to the increased force of such a concurrence of proofs.

Force, is rather, if not exclusively, a question of Religion.

2. That as such it is not to be determined by what is called Natural Theology, but (3) by the Word of God.

4. That there is much greater certainty of truth in a "Word of God" than in any knowledge which men can acquire otherwise, so that the meaning of the former ought not to be controlled by the latter.

5. That the notion of a "reign of law" is not found in Holy Scripture; which would not be, if that notion were true.

6. That the opposite, that is the truth of the immediate Will and Power of God in all things, is taught there in a thousand places.

This is really conclusive. But continuing our investigation by a history of the opinions of men concerning this, we find—7, That the belief in God's immediate power is taken for granted by early Christian writers—that of (8) "Nature" and its "laws" appeared first among pagan philosophers, and that long before Our Lord established His Church.

9. That the latter was akin to and of like suggestion with the belief in many gods, and yet was —

10. In intellectual tendency *atheistic*, as causing acute speculators to conclude that really "there is no God."

11. That some time after the Apostles it began to come among Christian writers, from the reading of Plato and Aristotle.

12. That such Christian writers erred in imagining that they could better understand or interpret God's Word by the help of those philosophers, whereas the only effect of this would be to obscure its meaning.

13. That the Holy Ghost by St. Paul had expressly forbidden this to the Church, and foretold these evil consequences; and that St. Paul could not but have had in his mind the philosophy of Plato as well as of the other Greeks, and did not, in fact, except it from his condemnation.

14. That this and the notion of "laws of Nature" came again into Christendom in the Dark Ages, from the writings of Mohammedan atheists.

15. That it found its way into modern science from the first.

16. That nevertheless it was not then entertained in the prevailing sense of our day, by the greatest men of science, who were both devout believers and men of profound thought.

17. That it grew strong and developed to what it is now, as "the reign of law," while lurking in convenient phrases, which were often expressly declared by those who used them, *not* to mean what is now generally allowed to be their meaning.

18. That the opposite and true idea, of God's will as the only real force, was maintained even by some of the Arabian philosophers, but later and better by devout Christian thinkers, as Des Cartes and Malebranche.

19. That it has had witnesses in the Church of every age since.

20. That the argument and authority of Hooker for a "reign of law," and his supposed chief proof of it from Holy Scripture, is a mistake of the meaning of the passage cited.

21. That the religious opposition to the Copernican astronomy, and the persecution of Galileo 300 years ago, are no proof that we ought to adjust our religion to the notion of "laws of Nature" or any results of that notion.

22. That this false notion is not necessary to scientific investigation, and if it were, it would be better to dispense with that investigation.

23. That it is proved false by not according with one of the greatest of facts—the freedom of man's will.

24. Also by its inconsistency with *the* greatest of all facts—the absolute Will and Love of God.

25. That if it be received by us as certain truth, its entire discrepancy with the general language and spirit of the Holy Scriptures, casts doubt upon *their* truth, and weakens their power over our souls.

26. That its necessary and actual tendency is to change the heretofore received meaning of Holy Writ.

27. That it has already exacted such a change of meaning as to the Creation, and thus rashly disturbed the faith of many.

28. That it is advancing to require the assent of all to like changes of our understanding of Holy Scripture, as to the primitive innocence and spiritual perfection of the first man and his fall from that state, as also of other matters of Christian doctrine.

29. That it is against the moral and spiritual good of mankind, promoting pride, self-sufficiency, selfishness and spiritual dulness.

30. That it is against prayer and praise, faith and love.

31. That it tends to deny God's giving of *spiritual* good to men.

32. That it prevents their seeing His loving will and power in all events of their life.

33. That the term "law" of necessary effect implies a free will governing and giving law, and other free wills subject to law and bound to obey it; so that the use of it for things necessary and mechanical, as of "laws of Nature" and their "reign," is essentially against the knowledge of right and wrong, and against true religion.

34. That it thus tends to unbelief and disobedience of the real law of God.

35. That it already, in fact, shows results of this dreadful tendency.

36. That the Will, which our best reason suggests to us as the real and only Force, is what God's Word fully discloses as Himself immediately working all things "by the wish of His own Will," which fact we are never to separate from the other supreme fact, that "God is Love," the measure of apprehension of which is the measure of our glory and felicity; though we can never *include* it in our thoughts, since it will always immeasurably overflow our power of thinking.

37. That this truth of "the Reign of God" has no

difficulties for faith in His Word, its miracles, prophecies and promises.

38. That it promotes love, prayer and praise to God, as well as the love of our neighbor man and all virtue; and thus it alone accords with "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

We may feel confident that in this examination no important matter bearing upon the truth in question has been overlooked or unfairly stated. Consider again the irresistible "consilience" of all these proofs bearing upon one glorious and blessed result. There is nothing left for us but to dismiss forever the false notion of a "reign of law," and to "embrace and ever hold fast" the truth which it denies. Thus even now we may begin to join in the everlasting chorus: "HALLELUJAH! for the LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH!"

CHAPTER XIX.

SUGGESTIONS AND REMONSTRANCES.

THE writer wishes to say a few words more, as one man to another, to each of his readers of three classes. And first to plain people, who are in no sense scientific, and have only been disturbed in their quiet faith as Christians by what they read and hear all around them, that such faith is against "the laws of Nature." To me, looking again over all this field of discussion, it seems a very small matter whether I have merely the best of the argument with those whom I oppose. But it seems a very great matter to have said something, or to say it now, by which you or I may get to have, or keep, a true, steady faith in God. We cannot be happy without that. We cannot have the glory and peace of children of Him, without such a faith that His Word will illuminate all this world and life for us, and shine into the Eternity beyond. Without this faith we cannot be good Christians, having real life in Our Glorious Lord, the Son of God; the Holy Spirit also making us holy. All the books, newspapers, science, intellect, civilization or "culture" which we could have, or aspire to, could not begin to make up for the loss of that. All of them that are any way against that faith stand between us and the TRUTH.

There is now in what every one reads much that

casts doubt and scorn upon that faith ; and there are so many things said by those who pass for the more knowing, as though no well-informed person could really believe the Holy Bible in what has always before seemed its plain sense, that it would not be strange if you were unsettled by this. Then the books and papers and sermons in reply have not helped you much or any. There have been in them, instead of the courage and common sense of an unmoved belief, many signs of timidity, or such cold, far-fetched, *unreligious* arguments, calling you down from the high grounds of faith. Sometimes, if there was any real meaning, it was concealed in new and outlandish words—

“ of learned length and thundering sound.”

So you have feared that henceforth none were to see the true God and eternal life in the Holy Scriptures, except very ignorant persons, and the very few others who could be devout *and* “scientific.” Perhaps you have trembled about this, not for yourselves, but for your children and all those who are to come after us all.

I do hope I have now done something to reassure you ; to break for our younger people, who are eager to read and believe everything that is against old ideas, the fascination of this arrogant and impudent belief. It has been plainly shown that it is a delusion to believe in a “reign of law,” and with this notion to disturb our faith in God and His Word. Let us then believe every word in the Holy Bible

about the Creation, the Flood, the great miracles done among the Israelites and all their wonderful history; for it is literal truth. Believe the prophecies and commands of the Lord God—all. Especially believe the Gospels, the Acts and Epistles of the Apostles, the glorious and awful Revelation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." Let nothing which is said about "laws of Nature" against this true religion, have weight with you, for there are no such laws.

None the less for these imaginary "laws of Nature," pray to God, and none the less hopefully and earnestly. He does listen to you with favor. He has power absolutely unlimited to do what you ask, and He is Infinite Love, which will decide upon your desire only by what is best for you. Don't be at all ashamed of this because, as "Appleton's" or "the Atlantic" or your city newspaper may inform you, Dr. Holmes, with his Boston sarcasm, or even Dr. Tyndall, with his British science, thinks your faith silly. It is these men who are the blind dupes of their own vanity of intellect.

And thank the Great God for everything good when you enjoy it. We ought not to do this only when it is something that we have prayed for before. Unsought and unthought of blessings are to be remembered with this grateful love, and with a tender self-reproach which even increases our sense of obligation. Yes, let us believe and think of each such thing as coming direct to us from our Good God; for this is true. It is true of *all* things: of the

morning sun shining in the fresh air ; of the welcome rains on fields perishing with thirst : of our food, our thoughts, our escapes from danger ; of everything that makes up our life.

If any one has followed this argument with me or given it any attention, with whom its most serious part, that is, its reasoning from the Christian faith and the Holy Bible, has no force, because he does not admit them to be true—I have something special to say to him. I have not until now directly addressed you, but seldom have you been out of my thoughts, or, pardon me for what may seem to you impertinent or arrogant, out of my loving anxiety. For we are living together in this strange world, with very sublime *possibilities* at least, before and after us all.

And then I have the sympathy with you of all seekers after truth. In this I doubt not you may be sincere in certain directions of search. But this very sympathy requires me to be very plain with you, and to say that I do not believe you are such honest seekers in the highest sense and as regards the most important subjects of thought. Our so much opposed conclusions require this judgment of one another. For we will agree that absolute truth has such affinity for man seeking it that he will never reject anything which is fully presented to his mind and is true, except as *some* perversity of will misleads him from approval of it. This is what you think of me, and what both of us think of some obstinate bigot. And yet in a fair sense we can call such a one honest and sincere.

One whom we all agree to have been at least a man who thought profoundly upon human life, has said that "men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil." May not you be affected by this aversion from truth in matters that involve, not physics or metaphysics, but our conduct towards our fellow-men and our *at least possible* duty to a "Supreme Being"? Thus I do account for your failure to seek and achieve the truth of religion.

And so while I have been through all these pages reasoning for a certain conclusion with those who, like me, take "the Word of God" as we believe it given to us in the Church of Jesus Christ, for certain truth, I would remind you that some parts of this argument are just as forcible for you who decline that authority. Thus I think I have made it clear to all that the idea of a "reign of law" is a mere assumption. I, therefore, challenge you to dismiss it, as you love truth and as you would decline any unproved postulate. Or if there be such proof yet possible, show it to me; for I also love truth and will gladly abandon my position if fairly disproved.

But beyond this I invite you for the love of truth to examine anew whether the Christian faith is not truth. And I offer as a sufficient reason for this task, the frightful *unmeaningness* of ourselves and of all else that exists, unless there is some true religion. Why should we exercise our reason upon anything when we know no *raison d'être* for ourselves? You ask a "reason why" for everything around us. But really can you be content to give *no* thought to

the question how and why you and your fellow-men exist to think at all? Can you be so indifferent to it that when most men around you believe that they have found a great answer to this as the greatest of questions, and have found in that answer the greatest sentiments and motives of action now, you will pay no attention to any one who offers to show you this; that you will smile at such thoughts as not worth thinking, and so foolish that they must be false without your investigation? Indeed, if this be a foolish use of thought, how silly it must be to study the habits of birds or anything in "Nature," except for the low uses of mere money-making? Why then should a man of any nobleness of spirit care to live at all?

But *look* at the Christian idea: not that feeble and timid shadow of it, which alone your fellow-naturalists who are Christians will probably ever venture to show you, but the real thing with its own force, if it has any; its answer to the question, "Why do I and all else exist?" There is a most good and glorious Person, invisible to us, but vastly greater than the greatest man or all of us men together. We and all else but He are, and are what we are, simply because He wishes it. He *is love*, and therefore wishes everything that He has made to be good and beautiful; and that everything to which He has given sensibility should have unbroken happiness. Some of these creatures are spiritual, that is persons, with a likeness to Himself so far as to be able to will and to love. Their greatness and felicity lie in

having their will and love accord with His. If it does not so accord, then ensue to them only dishonor and unhappiness.

Among the personal creatures of the Lord God, mankind fell into this evil will, and their deformity and unhappiness have even invaded the beautiful order of the innocent material world in which they live. Yet unlike that pitiless "Nature" which you put in the supreme place of a "Father Who is in Heaven," and which has nothing but unrelenting punishment for sinners, He whose loving will is the life of all, meets this great ruin with a great salvation. With amazing and most touching details of mercy and grace, He provides that all mankind *may* regain their life of perfect love of Him and of one another, and have for their immortal residence a "new Heavens and new Earth," without the wounds and scars of this unhappy world. And yet the evil will of some can (because by the Omnipotent Will theirs has been made a real will of choice), and will persist in being evil and in refusing to be made good and happy, whether this perverseness take the form of mere neglect, or add to it a denial of the truth that God reigns over all and has sent His Son to be the Saviour of the world. But, however this may affect such unhappy creatures in the end, the Blessed and Only Potentate will do His good pleasure perfectly and forever more.

Now, first, is it not better to know the actual purpose of our being than to be ignorant and indifferent about it? Is not this so even if we are eager to pur-

sue some other kind of knowledge? Is it not worth while to take every means of learning whether this Christian faith is not the true account of it? Of course I do not mean by this such a searching for arguments against it, as a man might make under pretence of enquiry when he had resolved beforehand that nothing could convince him. That *might* be a terrible crime against his own destiny and a silly outrage upon a very great Person. Would it not be an unutterable shame to find out when too late, that after all it was true, and had been not only neglected, but scorned as a superstitious fiction?

Only compare this Christian theory of human life with your doctrine of "the whole duty of man," as I shall now declare it; for to reject the one is really to accept the other, viz.: That we live in the midst, and as parts, of a vast machine which exists *somehow*, whether it ever really began or not; that it is perfect in all its parts and movements, and that we can be and ought to be always finding out some of its invariable "laws"; that *to* exist and do this for three-score and ten years, perhaps less, possibly a little more, is all that the most favored of men can understand as their reason for existing.

Now, does that seem to you worthy of the

—"being of large discourse—looking before and after"?

Even this discovery of new "laws of Nature" cannot employ one man in a hundred. And what will even these exist for, when all those "laws" are discovered? Will that consummation of knowledge be

a signal for the extinction of mankind? Or if that be immeasurably distant in the future, so in proportion must our present knowledge be small, feeble and uncertain; unworthy to be applied to these great questions of religion. No; as compared with his idea who *imagines* himself (if you will) made for such a Divine passion of devotion to His Maker as I have described, yours is a very low and dull hypothesis. It is alike for the highest as well as the lowest of our race, in substance

—"to draw nutrition, propagate, and rot."

If it is the truth, it is better than any contradiction of it. But if not true, and you refuse to find the absolute Divine truth in religion, what then?

But I should trifle with you and mislead you if I only asked you thus to find truth by your own thoughts. There is something much more certain and complete. God has spoken it to us directly in words. You may say that I require you to submit to "authority." Yes, I invite you, as I rejoice in enjoying it myself, to find truth in the "authority" of "*Our* Father Who is in Heaven." Begin with reading the four Holy Gospels, where you will find the words as far removed from human ambition or dictation as they ever are, and with a simplicity which even Mr. Darwin cannot surpass. I believe that if you follow this beginning candidly, it will lead you on to see that "Nature" is a false deity, and its "laws" the fictions of a superstition; to adore the Holy Trinity of the Christian faith as the

One True God, and in the Divine society of men which He has established for our good, to find Him your light and your salvation.

My last words are for my earnest fellow-Christians who are interested in the "Science" of the day and accustomed to use its language, and who admit its conclusions as ascertained verities by which we must adjust our previous impressions of the meaning of the Word of God. You and I have a common interest and affection that far exceeds in value the scientific knowledge, estimate that as high as we may. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, which is a sacred profession of that Lord and faith, and of the union of our hearts in the Church. Let us decide this question first upon that common ground of ours; after that let any other interest be heard in argument. Let us begin by trying it by these highest tests of truth. What will most honor Him "by Whom all things were made, and Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven"? What will tend most to draw all our fellow-men into this faith and salvation? What will most make us all see God now and love Him most?

One fact and "ascertained verity" is that Our Lord is coming to judge the world, no one knows how soon. What view of that *Cosmos* will most promote a loving looking for Him? Will He then "find faith upon the earth"? He has asked that question. Is there not danger that our ambition to know so much of the inferior things without taking

care for faith, is solving the mystery of His question by this very sacrifice of our loving faith to this cold and unspiritual "Science"? What will it profit us, or relieve our shame and grief at having helped on that result, that we have gained the whole world of that knowledge, if when we really come to know all, we find that we thus sacrificed the highest truth?

Therefore, I entreat you to consider and reconsider this well. Probably you have never before had it presented to you in this way. You may have been only impatient and indignant with those who said that Science was an enemy of Faith. But were they altogether so unreasonable? Perhaps, if they gave no reasons, theirs was yet a strong conviction fixed upon the grounds now set forth in this book. Refute them if they are wrong, or if upon this study you find them right, join with us heartily in that truth, cost what it may. If I am partly right but partly wrong, show that; or if my arguments and apprehensions are all wrong, prove that. The opposing truth will then come out the clearer, and true faith in God be the stronger for clearing up these troubles of other minds. But, again I implore, if you do begin to see that you and all our admired leaders of opinion in this have entered upon a deviation from truth and a tendency most dangerous to the souls of all men; for God's sake and all these souls' sakes, leave it now, no matter how great names and influences detain you, or how weak and unknown until now is this voice of remonstrance.

You may think that you are indeed to be Chris-

tians in all that is especially religious, but that for science you must have with all the scientific, many of whom have no Christian faith, some "common ground," which can only be that of "Natural law" and its "reign" (no matter how questionable the relations of that notion to faith). But is not this a mistake? In other matters, perhaps, a man may thus distinguish his different "capacities." He may say, "I will do one thing and have one association in my capacity of *citizen*, and others in that of *scholar*." But does not my *religion* require the whole man and all my time; other things only as subordinate *parts* of that? Are not its sympathies and fellowship our sole and sufficient union with fellow-men, except so far as any other association may accord perfectly with that, and be subject to its interests and principles; so that nothing of them is to be conceded, suppressed or silenced even for a time, in order to join with other men in promoting these other purposes?

One thing which makes the Church of God so feeble and slow in its conquest of all this world to Our Lord, is this modern notion of its members sometimes acting in other "capacities," as if the social man, the political man or the intelligent man were for the time some one else than the Christian man, or could then "waive" his character as this last to "meet on common ground" with his neighbor or fellow-citizen who was not a Christian. This questionable tendency is much boasted of as the wise and honorable liberality of our age. But has it not been

allowed at least scope enough in society, in schools for the young, and in politics, without exacting of a "son of the Lord Almighty" that to study geology and "biology" he shall meet those who do not believe the Word of God "on common ground" by expelling from his expressions and thoughts for the time, the very highest truth?

I would that we might all now finally reconsider these words in studying certain words which are truth itself. They are not those of Moses with any supposed "limited range of information about physical facts." They do not at all belong to the imperfect truth of the Old Testament, and are not even words of the Lord's Apostles as moved by the Holy Ghost. They are His own utterance, the farthest removed from mysteries and figures which are to be explained by later knowledge. They are the most simple, the most practical, in the daily use of the Christian child as well as of the wisest man who prays, and they are uttered in every service of a hundred thousand churches. I appeal to all of you as you believe in Him Who said to us, "When ye pray say" these words, whether the thought of "the Reign of God" is not in all their spirit, and whether that of the "reign of law" is not contrary to it.

"*Our Father Who art in Heaven*" [the beginning and end of our life; a Person Whom we love and Who loves us; and as this love is our first desire, so our first request of Him is] *Hallowed be Thy Name.* [It is the greatest of desires and delights to us to

behold His exceeding Power and Beauty and say "All glory be to Thee Almighty God Our Heavenly Father."] *Thy Kingdom come, Thy Will be done on earth as it is done in Heaven.* [His Kingdom, His reign! He is the Great King. How is His Kingdom yet to come? By the victory of His love in the complete redemption of mankind, but also, and as a part of this, in the joyful acknowledgment of that power and reign in all things, as the other words also declare it, "Thy Will be done on Earth," and known as so done, "as it is in Heaven," where God is All in All to every soul.] *Give us this day our daily bread*; [It is also a part of our rightful desire and of His Will and Power (which we have already prayed might have effect), that we should have all that is needful for our present life; and, what is yet more happy, should receive it all directly from His hand. But then to think how we have fallen from man's first estate of knowing and loving Him in everything! So that we have as great need of this pardon,] *Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.* [We dare not and we would not ask this unless we have the true penitence which forgives the little wrongs which we do another; for our estrangement from Divine love has made us selfish and unjust, and impatience and revenge for these would impel us farther from Thy Will and Law; that each of us should love his neighbor as himself. Thus too, as sins are our greatest calamities, and there are wicked spirits who led in their rebellion against Thee by one most powerful, are our

greatest enemies by tempting us to sin, so we pray,] *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.* [And so we come to what is the end, as it was the beginning of our prayer, even the Will and Glory of God.] **FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER AND EVER.** [The *Reign of God*, alone and always: the Power, as much, as immediate, now, as in the beginning. The Glory of that irresistible Will of Love in all the immortal future which we shall enjoy without pain, without disappointment, without fear and without fault.]

“For *Thine is the Kingdom*”: is that “the reign of law”? Away with this cold and feeble fiction which hides the truth of all truths! Let that be always in sight. Let there be no moment of time in which we do not hear that last and greatest voice of Divine prophecy, and join in it as the eternal chorus:

“AND HE SHALL REIGN FOREVER AND EVER!”

APPENDIX A.

METAPHYSICS: ITS VALUE AND INFLUENCE AS TO QUESTIONS OF RELIGION, AND OF DUTY TO GOD AND MAN.

IN this investigation, I do indeed allow little or no value to Metaphysics, but treat it rather as an impertinence in questions like these, hindering the attainment of truth. I beg the candid attention of many devout and thoughtful persons to whom this will at first seem very unreasonable, while I state my reasons for it.

It is contrary to the method of the modern apologists who pass for the more profound and wise. In fact, whoever neglects the metaphysical arguments is supposed by this "public opinion" to be sufficiently answered in being himself neglected as incapable of doing any service to Christian truth. And whoever directly censures it is only noticed as a stupid bigot and a greater enemy to that truth than the infidel. In a *real* search for truth this is not wise or candid. The Christian "philosopher" ought to require that it be first *proved* that Metaphysics is any such valuable element (or process) of religious truth; and still more, that it is such a foundation of true faith as is so much assumed. Even if once convinced of it himself, he ought to follow with candor any re-examination of the question by the Word of God and our best reason, which is undertaken by those who question that postulate.

As the assumption is strong in the long-continued acquiescence of writers of greatest authority, I freely admit that I am bound to set forth more fully than in the text why I reject it. But surely either these reasons ought to be met and distinctly refuted, or metaphysical discussions should be withdrawn from all our books "for the defence and confirmation of the Gospel." Before proceeding to those reasons I would justify myself to some who may question whether the assumption controverted is made, or at least so as to be important, by citing some instances as representing what is general among the more famous Christian writers of this age in our mother country, and public journals which set the fashion of opinion in our own.

Sir W. Hamilton as the metaphysician of orthodox faith, and of greatest influence in our present English-speaking thought, affirms positively in more than one passage and change of phraseology, that "Theology is wholly dependent on Psychology," (which he uses as equivalent to Metaphysics, though he sometimes distinguishes it as, together with "Ontology," making up that total.) Then in the interesting volume called "Faith and Free Thought," published some years ago by the "Christian Evidence Society," of England, we have first a discourse by Prof. Mozley to show that we *must* be metaphysical to have Christian faith. As he expresses it in one place: "Even the Bible can no more be understood without the aid of these great metaphysical ideas than it can be without grammar." [I am not now

enquiring into the truth of this statement (that will come later), but only showing what such writers say.] Dean Merivale makes the same assumption in substance in his singular essay in the same volume, upon "the Contrast between Pagan and Christian Society."

Even Dean Mansel in his many ways admirable volume upon "The Limits of Religious Thought," which was suggested by the danger of which I speak, and was meant to expose it, is too much under these intellectual illusions to escape the mischief entirely himself. Of this his critics and opposers took most annoying advantage. He plays with the fascinating deceits of religious metaphysics in such a longing way, that he can hardly defend himself against the charge of admitting, that man *cannot* "know God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent."

For our side of the Atlantic, and as showing the prevailing drift of opinion here, I may note first, that in these questions, whatever has most authority in England has scarcely less with us. So also not very long ago I saw in the "Independent," a religious newspaper of wide circulation and influence, an article in which a writer of no little research and force, admits with regret the decline of Christian faith among reading people, and concludes that the only hope of its restoration is in a new "ontology." An instance in some respects even more to the purpose is that so intelligent a defender of Christian truth as the late Prof. Bledsoe, in many ways our most profound philosopher, argues to the same effect,

and even (as I have cited Prof. Mozley above,) insists upon every man being a metaphysician *malgre lui*. (See "Southern Review," Art. "English Positivism.")

Now nothing strikes one who tries to study all metaphysics fairly, or at least to get a general knowledge of it, more than its contradictions and reciprocal condemnations. If he has set out to be a zealous partisan of some one "school," the task is much easier. He must then indeed pretend to understand many words and distinctions which really convey no meaning to his mind. After a while he will really believe that he does understand them. But by sticking to the general method of believing that all which his master teaches must be transcendent truth, and that all from whom he differs have failed to receive that truth from lack of intellectual force or from mere prejudice, he gets on quite smoothly. If, however, he is free and candid enough to seek for the truth from all the metaphysicians alike, then for one thing at least he is bewildered, not only by what is unintelligible in each of them, but by their reciprocal contradictions.

In this so-called science there has been no *progress* of knowledge, no advance from its beginnings, gradually eliminating the false and clearing up the doubtful. There is no great residuum of agreed and demonstrated truth after you have discarded mere individual opinions. There is not a single so-called "principle" of metaphysics which is not denied by some one of great name among these philosophers. There is nothing which is not still left in doubt for

learners. There is no acknowledged umpire of the disputes. In our natural sciences there is something which passes for authority in the consent of writers of our own time. But none of the questions of metaphysics are ever so disposed of that they cease to be questions. What has been allowed on all hands in one age it may indeed become the fashion of the next to dismiss as unworthy of attention. Yet after a while it reappears as the triumphant truth, either under a new name as a great discovery, or in the pomp of a banished king restored by the devoted loyalty of new champions. Any extensive reading of metaphysics conducts one again and again through these processes, with such complications of writers and schools, and such various combinations of what were before considered essentially opposite doctrines, and such shouts of assured and final victory of each party in turn, that honest students are worn out with confusion and loss of connected thought.

And there are the like contradictions of fact as well as of opinion. For instance, there ought to be no question of what the famous philosophers taught, whose books have been in all scholars' hands for ages, and whose opinions are just what other thinking men have been ever since ranging themselves for or against. Yet there are quite different accounts given of those opinions, not by the *misrepresentations* of adversaries, but by the statements of admirers. That would be a curious book which would give all the doctrines of Plato as stated by different Platonists.

A later instance, and one even more connected with our present investigation, is that of Des Cartes, one of the greatest of thinkers and of those who really influence the thoughts of other men now. "The History of Philosophy" by Kuno Fischer, which is the authority in such matters followed by our "American Cyclopedia," to which four-fifths of our people would go for information with entire confidence, says that the doctrines of Des Cartes, and of his great follower Malebranche, are those which Spinoza followed directly to all *his* conclusions. Now both of the former were devout believers in Our Lord Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of all mankind, and would entertain no opinion for a moment which they could not hold along with that the highest truth. On the other hand Spinoza fancied that he proved that there was no God, that that was only a word for a huge "nature," that there was no real sin, and thus no such person as the Saviour.

I cannot conceive of two sets of opinions more opposed than, on the one hand, the profound and devout speculations of the two French Christians who saw the person and power of God *in everything*, and on the other, the blind pantheism of Spinoza, which sees Him in nothing. If we do not at first see this clearly, we may come to do so by setting in contrast those most sublime words which begin St. John's gospel, and which the Christians could use as their formula of thought (and adoration), with this travesty of them which would fairly state the Pan-

theist notion: "In the beginning was the *world* (*κοσμος*), and the *world* was with God, and the *world* was God." It is just such a sacrilegious inversion of meaning when the followers of Spinoza quote St. Paul as in favor of their outright denial of God: "In Him we live and move and have our being." Their false notion and this great truth are exclusive contradictions of one another.

Even the great philosopher of our own race and language has not escaped this treatment. We have all taken for granted that Bacon was so wise in thought, and so powerful and beautiful in the expression of it, that we knew what he meant by "induction," and were sure that it was the true method of physical science. Yet our metaphysicians now fall into controversy over this very matter, and as to what his real method was. It is a powerful illustration of the fascinations and illusions of such reasonings that even he who speaks of the barrenness of metaphysics and calls Plato a sophist, does not quite escape them. And now Mr. Huxley decries Bacon and his services to science, with a consciousness of his own departing from induction and reliance upon metaphysical imagination for the new science, as well as from the instinctive aversion of his *unreligious* method of thinking to that of the *devout* philosopher.

The speculations of metaphysics are indeed very attractive to ingenious minds. Such severe abstractions do strengthen the intellect in some directions, and may conduct to valuable truth in some matters.

But experience shows that upon the whole this is a very doubtful process for adding to any real knowledge. If this were all, it might still pass for a harmless amusement of mere men of books, or even of men of action in their times of necessary rest. But it always (whether from the very nature of all its questions, or by some dangerous fascination of the more vigorous minds,) in fact works its way into questions of religion, and offers itself to give men knowledge of God. And then, as all experience shows, and as we might wisely judge from the nature of things, and as we do know more surely still by the admonition of the Blessed One Himself, it only confuses what we know already as Christians, and conducts us away from the highest truth.

Yet, as we have seen before, learned Christian writers tell us all, that what we all want to re-establish waning faith is still more of this "ontology," etc. Thus, even Prof. Mozley confounds great spiritual truth of which God informs us directly, with the unfruitful and absurd ambition of men to construct a human science of this truth; to comprehend the absolute; to measure in their thought the unmeasurable, to analyze what is absolutely simple, and to advance by their reasonings even beyond that many-sided vastness of which they can never see more than the side which is at the time nearest to them. This is what they do, when, instead of receiving direct from Him who gives and who is all truth, the thought of the Infinite, and of the Beginning, they set to work upon it as a little raw

material from which they are to digest and to expand a "science." Prof. Mozley's own illustration about "grammar" is an illustration of his own mistake. It implies that no man can read the Holy Bible with understanding unless he holds a book of technical grammar in the other hand, and laboriously applies its artificial terms and rules to each sentence of that Word of God. The diversion of thought and sterility of spiritual good which would result from such a process, is some illustration, though inadequate, of the effect of metaphysics upon religious thought.

I cannot myself see what place it allows to the knowledge of God given us directly by Himself in His Word. That Word includes, *first*, the primary converse of the Father with man, and its tradition through all ages since; *secondly*, God the Son, the Eternal Word by prophets or in human Person, and in His Church; and *thirdly*, the Holy Scriptures living in the Church by God the Holy Ghost "leading into all truth." If that Word is inferior to the Metaphysics, of what use is it? If superior and more full, including all that can be learned by the other, why not use it alone? If the Divine Word is only supplemental to the other (as seems to be the theory of the Christian metaphysicians so far as they have any,) why does not the former acknowledge the latter as antecedent and of authority? Or how can this philosophical "ontology" be the primary knowledge of God, of which His Word is only the supplement, while the former is still a

matter of research, and most indefinitely incomplete, as its champions themselves will say, and the latter is finished?

Or, taking the only remaining alternative, if the Word of God be the primary knowledge of Him, and the other the necessary complement, then we should first exhaust that before proceeding to our religious "ontology." No man has yet done that. He who thinks he has, casts the greatest and unjust reproach upon it as defective. So indeed does the whole assumption of getting knowledge in our religion from metaphysics. Certainly all later researches should start from the Word of God as the first, the plain, and the undisputed truth, and discard any subsequent apparent discovery which did not accord with that: which is the exact reverse of all actual metaphysical reasonings in religion.

If we were truly candid the whole matter would be cleared of misapprehension by attention to the just comparison which has been so often used of a little child who, being told by his most wise and loving father of that father's doings and feelings so far as they anyways concerned him, and as far as he could understand them — some of them things done before he was born — should decline to believe all this upon the simple information, and set to work by his own observations, and by reflections upon his own ways, "to lay a foundation of belief" * in the father's information, or at least to "verify" * those statements. Such a performance of the child would

*These are some of the phrases of metaphysicians about this.

make us smile. But in every point of contrast the "Father in Heaven" is vastly more above man in giving him knowledge of Himself than any of us is above this infant child.

Or suppose we compare it to a number of such young children talking with one another: one saying to his playfellow: "Father tells me that the sun there is larger than all the world we live in; that it remains still while we are moving swiftly as if on the rim of a great wheel; that the world is such a great ball turning clear around from one morning to another,—can you believe it?" "No," says the other, "for I see the sun rise and travel through the sky every day. I walk on the ground which is flat. But then father says he can explain all this and make us see that he is right; and so he talks away. But after all the sun does move and the world is flat. Still let us try and see if he can be right. Let us start and go right west as far as we can to-day, and to where the sun sets behind that hill, and see whether when we get near it it is standing still, and whether the world is round or flat." Then these young persons having by this experiment found nothing to "verify" their fathers' words, fall back upon what "reason" teaches them.

"God's Word written" speaks to us of all things Divine, always in the simple and direct way. It takes for granted that when it tells any man about God, whether ignorant or learned, with just a little intelligence, or with the most powerful mind He ever gives one of us, he knows what it means with-

out any metaphysical reasoning about the "me" and the "not me," etc.; that when it tells him that God created all things, he can and ought to receive that knowledge fully without any ponderings and questionings concerning "causation." It is not at all relevant or necessary for us now to take part in the philosophic wars about "innate (or *con-nate*) ideas." The fact is enough for us that a "man that has never been taught letters," or a little child, can receive this knowledge of God at once from Himself; while he who will not do this, but insists upon first being a student of *ontologies*, etc.—even if he be a Christian to begin with—climbs up to the same truth in a weary and bewildered way, or perhaps ends as a dark doubter, such as certainly many of the most acute metaphysicians have been and are.

This shows further how utterly mistaken are those champions of faith who maintain that a man cannot have religious thought except by being metaphysical. Their own ingenuity has enticed them into a juggle of words which confound our simple and direct assent to God's Word with abstruse reasonings about "consciousness" and "causation." These last, whether true or not, are a few men's elaborations. The other is a universal fact, as well known (and even better) to the laborer as to the student. Could not Cowper's weaver use his eyesight without knowing and accepting the undulatory theory of light? No less could he believe without an abstruse theory of belief. To say then that an ignorant man may at once believe God's words, but

that the intelligent must first "lay the foundation of belief" by *ontology*, etc., is its own refutation. For certainly then he who at first knows the less knows the more. He at once attains knowledge, and that the very greatest, which the other achieves only later and by study. There is but one sense in which this paradox can be true. That is the sense of God's Word in its condemnation of this most subtle sort of human vanity (with all the other sorts), when men after having received knowledge of God from Himself, instead of having the simple faith and love which should ensue, set to work to use this knowledge as material for their intellectual ambition; to seek by argument and controversy the very information already given them from Heaven. Thus "the world by *wisdom knew not God*."

I would ask the Christian metaphysicians what else this does mean? It does not stand alone, but among other just such Divine warnings against trying to gain religious truth by human reasoning. What do *you* make of our Lord's saying that the greatest, most profound, and precious truths are *hidden* "from the wise and prudent (*σοφῶν καὶ συνετῶν*, the philosophic and intellectual) and revealed unto babes"? Did He mean merely the wrangling sophists? But He does not say *σοφιστῶν*, but *σοφῶν*, as also St. Paul in the corresponding passages. Did He mean Plato and the Platonists and the other metaphysical theologians with their followers? Plainly to me. What a "blind guide," in the chief truth, would Plato be to us Christians now, and is he, so

far as upon whatever pretext we follow him, with all his charms of style and subtlety of speculation !

He supposes every man to love truth and goodness for their own sake, and that it is merely from intellectual ignorance that he ever misses them. The Gospel of God shows us that this is false, and that if man sets forth from this vain imagination to discourse upon his duty and upon God, his foolish heart will only be darkened by his most ingenious studies ; that what he needs first is to seek truth about these things in the exactly opposite direction, of penitence and a child's obedient faith in what God says to men *in words*.

Perhaps some will say that what the Word of God itself warns us against in this, is the discarding of its authority entirely, or interpreting it only by men's reasonings. But this last is just what all religious metaphysics does. All the words of our Lord and of His Apostles assume and imply that it is easy for all men alike to receive the light of His truth in His Word ; that this does not at all depend upon brilliancy of intelligence or subtlety of thought ; on the contrary, that there is always danger that these will actually mislead us from that truth by exciting vanity and self-confidence, which all men have to overcome by penitence and humility.

It is very unwise in a Christian believer to meet him who brings forward this truth, with reproaches that he is trying to degrade and blind the intelligence of man. The real, the only question for us is whether what has been said of humbly receiving the

Word of God, instead of subjecting it to our intellectual self-sufficiency, is the truth—is some of that very supreme truth which God Himself in His love utters to us directly. If so, the only blindness and degradation is in refusing to receive it. Such truth it is, belonging with that other great truth which the Divine Light and Love so plainly imparts to us—that pride is one of man's greatest dangers and weaknesses, and humility toward God his blessing and honor, far beyond any knowledge real or supposed.

Would not the "many wise" of St. Paul's day, if they were living now, have just this angry disdain of his reproofs, and call him in the clumsy jargon of some of our "liberals," an "obscurantist"? But you may say that his censure meant such or such a misuse of reason in religious questions; that you contend only for its proper use. Just so, no doubt, they would have said. All the σοφοι from Plato down are confident that they know the limits of reason, and do not go beyond them. And so, each in his way and degree, nullifies to himself the "wisdom that is from above."

The Divine words which I have quoted and alluded to are plain and full. They contain no exceptions, they suggest no qualifications. They are in exact accord with the great principle of receiving the Kingdom of God as a little child. They imply the exclusion from religious faith of *all* philosophic speculation. This is a necessity of any "Word of God" as such, which must be made up of words

which tell their sense directly to men, and are not to be wrangled over by ingenious disputants, and so to mean whatever the latest and subtlest sophist says they mean. To admit that it is declared in God's Word and is true, that A. D. 30-60 "the world by wisdom knew not God," and yet contend that this agrees with the opinion that the metaphysicians from Pythagoras to Sir W. Hamilton are the necessary supports of Christian belief, is as "rationalistic" (and irrational) as the conclusions of any German mysticist.

Nor is this less true if it be argued, that while men *should* believe the Divine Word directly, still metaphysics must be used to restore this faith when it is, as now, impaired in any way in men or societies. The evil began with deviating from simple reception of truth from God into abstract speculation. Why then should we seek to correct it by more of these speculations? Is not this merely to continue in the wrong direction of intellectual pride, instead of leaving that entirely and returning to obedient humility toward God? Otherwise, why will we not have again only that uncertain and unsatisfactory result of human argument, which has already led us away from the authority of God's Word? Shall we set the rock upon the quicksand? Can the stream of faith, then, rise higher than its fountain of human reasoning?

Without doubt, puzzling questions can be raised about this. Among such, it may be said that if we exclude reason from religion, we leave men no

chance to escape from religious error maintained by authority. And so, on the other hand, that God has made men to believe intelligently, and thus by reason to "prove all things" offered to their faith, so that they may "hold fast that which is good." This last is true as a part of that Divine Word. But then, to say nothing of other sentences of Holy Writ already before us, its real sense must be according to the whole tenor of that Word, and cannot be against that, to the destruction of all faith. Nor is it contrary to this other truth—that plain and simple people can believe the Word of God intelligently, and are more likely to do so than the ambitiously intellectual.

We are to use our truth-loving good sense to ascertain how God has given us His Word; and then we are to take that Word in its plain meaning and believe it. Simple love of truth will find no great difficulty in this, even if enticed away from it on the one side by any supposed authority which contends, in spite of history and common sense, that the words mean their opposites and always did; or, on the other side, by another departure from the plain meaning, upon the pretence that our reason does not accord with that meaning. Obedient and reverent faith may sometimes have to say, "I do not understand," but it will never say, "I will not believe."

Suppose, however, that there are a few foolishly argumentative men, who have indulged in this intellectual dissipation until they have become such spiritual weaklings as to be incapable of plain,

rational faith, until they are first dosed with the poisonous drugs of religious metaphysics. Must these be forced upon those who are wholesome and hearty of soul enough to believe the Word of God with simplicity? Yet this is just what our modern "aids to faith" do. I see in none of them a warning to the morbid doubter that his want of faith is mental infirmity, nor any assurance to those of their readers who believe (and who are likely to be much the more in number) that their faith, which did not begin in metaphysics, is the healthy and vigorous action of man's soul. On the contrary, the doubter is probably flattered in his foolish self-reliance by the very means used to induce him to believe; while the others are confused and weakened in their immediate faith by the writer's argument grounding it upon metaphysics. Therefore, those strong and clear words of our Lord and of His prophet-apostle include this in their censure of the blindness of "the wise and prudent."

APPENDIX B.

THE METHOD AND RULES BY WHICH THIS EXAMINATION
OF HOLY SCRIPTURE HAS BEEN MADE.

1. **T**O note all distinct mentions of (*a*) Creation, (*b*) Providence (meaning by this the usual and uniform movements and successions in what we call "Nature," including *life*, whether human, animal or vegetable), (*c*) Miracles (*i. e.* all things not occurring in Providence as above, but striking the mind as *super-natural*. This must include all foreknowledge and prophecies of events when not derived from calculation or from observation of the past, as also all about angels and evil spirits, and everything communicated *from God* in word or vision to men, or to any one man, with the visions themselves; also all about the fall and redemption of mankind, heaven, hell, and the eternal life to come.) (*d*) Prayer, as followed, or promised to be followed, by the obtaining of what a man has thus asked of God.

2. To note all plain, *incidental* mentions of or allusions to the above particulars. Otherwise, we might miss seeing the most surprising and convincing foot-prints of truth in such fresh paths, not yet beaten into iron hardness by the tread of controversy.

3. In case of doubt as to whether passages fairly belong to either of the above classes, rather to omit them, as they may describe a merely *human* act.

4. If it be only doubtful to *which* of two of these classes they may belong, to refer them to both such, but count them only once in the aggregate.

5. To note the *number* of them under each head. This, of course, is not of much force by itself, but is suggestive and worthy of candid thought in our final conclusions.

6. Especially to distinguish and examine any passages which may have been thought to mean "laws of Nature" or the like, or which have seemed to me of like force with such passages cited by others.

7. To study how far these last are or are not evidently figures of speech.

8. Also to note especially such as mention what we commonly call "natural events," as done directly by Divine power and will.

9. To study whether *these* can be considered figures of speech; to compare them as such with the last-mentioned class (see 6), as to (a) their accord in literal or in figurative sense with other Scripture, or (b) with our usual understanding of language and our best reason, or (c) as to the comparative frequency or number of them.

10. To observe as to any distinction made in Holy Scripture between Creation and subsequent acts of Divine power.

11. To observe whether miracles are ever noted in Holy Writ as interpositions in "laws of Nature," or anything of the kind.

12. To notice whether or how the miracles are there distinguished from Providence.

13. To examine as to how we are to consider the written Word, as related in its construction to the limits of human understanding (not merely of inferior minds, but as well of the greatest intellects); whether, *e. g.*, what we may be disposed to construe in the sense of "laws of Nature" is not expressed as it is only in gracious accommodation to our imperfect minds, while that which tells of incessant and immediate Divine will and power is the absolute *fact*.

14. Thus also to carefully observe every passage of Holy Writ which compares our knowledge as received by a "Word of God" with that which comes to us by our perception of the works of God and our own intellectual processes. Such passages will be found mainly of the following kinds: 1st, such as relate that God spoke to men with an audible voice; 2d, such as compare the "wisdom from above" with "man's wisdom"; and 3d, such as distinguish between "Thus saith the Lord," and any other saying.

15. To examine whether there be in God's Word any such form of speech, or any equivalent, or even traces, of the language commonly used by us about "Nature" and "laws."

Certainly, if there be none such, it should go far with a candid Christian to dismiss those notions. Holy Scripture was indeed not meant to teach any "science," but it certainly does not contradict any truth. And any real truth, discovered by men after the Word of God came to them, would not contradict the simple sense of that Word. Such truth as a

"reign of law," if truth it be, *belonging to* religion, would be found plainly enfolded in the Book of God, and readily *un*-folded from it.

If any one insist that it is the passages which declare the immediate power of God (see "8." as above) that are figurative, and those which are alleged as mentioning a "reign of law" (see "6.") that are literal, it is necessary for us to decide this, as searching the Holy Scriptures to learn their meaning, and not to argue for opinions already formed. It is certainly a use of figurative language in the one case or the other. Now when God uses the language of men to speak to them, figures are used, not to conceal truth, but to exhibit it to them. We may be sure the figures are not used instead of the most literal words unless either human speech is unequal to the Divine mysteries taught, or by way of eloquence and poetry to stir our spiritual dullness and give us a better vision of the glory and beauty of heavenly things. Let us try this question by such rules of interpretation as follow from these principles. It is dangerous to truth to call any such a figure when it may be literal, for then we might destroy the meaning of all Scripture and all real faith in any Word of God. It is, therefore, a true rule, established by consent of the wisest scholars, that the literal meaning is to be preferred whenever it would be the understanding of the words without explanation, unless special proof of the contrary can be shown.

It is as natural to understand some expressions figuratively as others literally. Thus, if I heard a

person say, "I am the door," "I am the vine," it would be the natural thing for us to understand him to mean, "I am as a door," &c., and it would seem strange to us to have it said that this meant that he was such a part of a house, or a climbing plant. Figurative language, as such, is as natural and as little likely to be mistaken in its true place as the literal. Yet, when words are used which are not upon their face and in their first impression figurative, they are probably literal. Another such rule is that the literal language is more frequently used than any given figure. Another, that figures are not so likely to be used in prose and precept as in poetry or eloquence, or to appeal to our sentiments.

There are two classes of sentences in Holy Scripture, of which the one literally taken declares that God does all things in heaven and earth personally, directly and incessantly, by immediate will and power, while the other is quoted to show that this is not so, but that at Creation He set up "laws" and "forces" which continue that will which He had in the beginning, while He only intervenes in person with miracles. If these passages are rightly cited to that effect, then those of the former class are all figurative; but if they are literally true, then the others are figurative expressions.

Observe then that according to the rules already given, it is the first class which are (1.) much the more numerous, (2.) intelligible at once in literal meaning, and naturally so understood by all men at first, and (3.) used in plain prose of precept and

example; while the others are (1.) but very few in all, (2.) figurative any way even when cited to prove "natural law," and (3.) occur only in the poetical and rhetorical Scriptures. When we add that the former are used by our Lord the light of the world, to teach us how to behold God and understand His works, and the others are not in the New Testament at all, there seems to remain no candid doubt how we shall decide this question.

APPENDIX C.

CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF EP. TO THE ROMANS, CHAP. I. 1,
TO III. 10, AND 1 EP. TO COR. CHAPS. I. AND II.

Neither of the two passages of St. Paul's Epistles here discussed together can be thoroughly examined without the other. I shall begin with that from the 1 Epistle to the Corinthians, not only because it is earlier in date of writing, but because there is a profound connection of them in this order and in the occasions of their writing as touching the very questions now before us.

When St. Paul came first to Corinth and founded that church, he came direct from Athens. There he had just had his famous encounter with the Greek philosophers. It so happened that it was some of the Epicureans and Stoics who made the formal challenge to the Apostle to make a public exposition of his doctrine upon Mars Hill. None the less must we suppose that all the philosophies were represented among his auditors there, and brought to his notice, even if never before, in the private discussions which followed thereupon.

Thence, as we have seen, and with his thoughts full of what the intellectual leaders of all the Greeks held for *σοφία*—wisdom—the greatest things that men had ever thought out, or others could learn from these thinkers, he went straight, but a day or two's journey, to another city of Greece. There he stayed

long, and gathered a church which was remarkable in several respects, immortally so as having addressed to it two of the chief inspired Epistles. Corinth was not, like Athens, the incomparable centre of art and thought. It was rather busy and rich, and the centre of the Roman government of Greece. But still it was altogether a Greek city, penetrated by the same subtle and ambitious speculations which converged from all the Hellenic people upon Athens, and radiated again thence through them all.

At Corinth, unlike some other Greek towns, the Christians were not made up mostly from Jewish families living there, but almost entirely of real Gentile Greeks. So these Epistles are not occupied with correcting the mistakes of Israelites about the Messiah and the Law, but with heathen vices and intellectual vanity, to which they were most prone. This last had been the chief cause of the parties and schisms in the Church of Corinth which was the first occasion of the First Epistle. What St. Paul says of it we are now about to study with reference to some questions of our day.

There are certain expressions in this Epistle which had a definite meaning, and contained allusions which to us and in our translation do not appear upon the face of the words. Such are σοφός, the philosopher or sage, and σοφία, philosophy, as if the reasonings of the various sects of philosophers were the chief, if not the only true, wisdom. Almost certainly, these Greek words were familiar in this

sense to St. Paul from his earliest studies. Without doubt, they were thus well known to him after his visit to Athens and his long residence in Corinth. And in writing to the Corinthians afterwards, he would have known that they would so understand his use of the terms. All this philosophy of its various kinds, professed above all things to enlighten people with true thoughts of religion. Of this he takes notice at once. This would make it very interesting, were what he says only the judgment of that thoughtful Christian, that very wise and able preacher and prelate of the Church. But even this value of the passage is lost in its importance as what he wrote by inspiration of God, and as the Word of God to all lands and ages.

He comes to this matter at once in the outset of the Epistle as soon as, after his loving greeting, he begins to speak of that "preaching" (or proclaiming) of our Lord's Gospel, to which all his life and labor was given. "For Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel, not with *philosophy* of words, lest the cross of Christ should be of none effect. [The two things have no accord: this divine message of pardon by the oblation of Jesus Christ upon the cross, and the ambitious and self-confident speculations of all your Greek philosophers, which, so far from helping, would hide that truth from my hearers.] For the preaching of the Cross [the proclamation we make in our Lord's name of His dying to save sinners] is to them that perish foolishness [seems to those who are fond of these philosophies,

quite opposed to them, and therefore a dull superstition which they are too wise to believe in, and so they lose the divine and only salvation], but unto us which are saved [who abandon all such vain attempts to invent religious truth, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ] it is the power of God. For it is written, [as it was foretold even by the prophets before our Lord], 'I will destroy the philosophy of the sages, and confound the intelligence of the intellectual'. Where is the philosopher? where is the writer? where is the disputant of this world? Hath not God convicted of folly the philosophy of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God [His eternal power and love mastering all things, even the perverse wills of men] the world by its [pretended] wisdom [or philosophy] knew not God, it pleased God by [what this vain and presumptuous philosophy called] the foolishness of His proclamation of grace, to save some who were really wise enough to believe and gratefully accept it."

This translation presents the words to us simply as they must have been understood by the Christians of Corinth. It is, therefore, just what we want now, that we may decide whether it is true, as maintained by so many Christian scholars, that we ought to understand Christian doctrine according to Plato's or Aristotle's philosophy. We see that just the reverse is true—that we are not encouraged, that we are not permitted, that we are even strictly forbidden to do this.

Within the next year, St. Paul visited Corinth

again, and while there wrote the Epistle to the Romans. We have every reason to think that the Church at the capital of the world was then one of the most intelligent of the Christian societies. While some of its members may have been of the Israelites residing in Rome, they are all addressed in the Greek language, and as if they were "Greeks." There are many proofs that Greek was the language of the Church of Rome in the Apostles' days, and for some time after. So these Roman Christians, being in the main Greeks, some by birth and almost all by language and education, we shall best understand St. Paul, in an epistle to them, as using the words of their language in the sense most familiar to them as such.

It is a sort of continuation of his counsels to the Church in Corinth; his mind filled again, by revisiting that city and people, with those deep thoughts of the dangers of Greek philosophy to wise faith and religion. But he now proceeds to declare to the Greeks at Rome how the great salvation of Christ Jesus was for all men alike—Jews or Greeks, under the shadow of the imperial palace or within it, or in the most distant provincial village, brought up in the law of Moses, or knowing until then only the religion of idols or of vague philosophy.

Thus, after noble and beautiful salutations, he enters upon that subject at once, telling the Christians at Rome that he felt it his duty to proclaim the great Gospel among them also—to Greeks as well as barbarous people—to the philosophical (*σοφοῖς*)

as well as to the unintelligent (*ἀνοήτοις*). That Gospel is the Divine power for Greek as well as Jew. Then he proceeds to show how all mankind, though first innocent and having pure knowledge of God, fell into sin and lost the truth of religion; which loss, so much repaired among the Israelites by the later Word of God by Moses and the prophets, had no such checks for its descending corruption among other nations. Yet this does not acquit them in the judgment of God.

As he proceeds to say (Rom. i. 19, &c.), "Because some knowledge of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For ever since the creation of the world, and that pure knowledge of Himself that He first gave to man when He made him in His own image, those invisible things of His, even his eternal power and Divinity, are clearly seen, being perceived (and recalled to thought) through the things that were made; so that they are not excused by their false religion from guilt toward Him. Because that when they knew God (knew Him at first fully, and even in the downward progress of losing this knowledge by disobedience, knew Him still in even the most corrupt religion by the thought of superhuman unseen power which commanded them to be better and purer than they chose to be) they glorified Him not as God (with devout love), neither were thankful, but became perverse in their reasonings, and their foolish heart was darkened. Saying that they were philosophic (that is, even the more intellectual, to whom the rest

looked up) they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like to corruptible man (this was the actual worship of even Socrates and Plato), and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.

"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, &c., (to which sensual degradation these same philosophers seem to have been as indifferent as other people, assuming it to be natural and necessary), who changed the truth of God (that most exalted thought of *religion*) into a lie, and worshipped and adored the Creation ('Nature,' &c.) instead of the Creator, Who is blessed forever, Amen. For this cause (and as the evil tendency of all neglect of Him) God gave them up to vile affections, &c. (worse and more unnatural abuses of their physical life, in which the most rich and refined—the lovers of art and authors of ingenious philosophy—were as much implicated as the ignorant and superstitious). And even as they gave no thought to retain God in their knowledge (to have a religion in which they thought of Him as to be supremely loved in holy life), God gave them over to a debased *mind*, to do things altogether unworthy of the life of man, being filled," &c. (Here follow verses 29-32, that fearful description of the immoral life of *all* the Gentile people, in which those especially "professing themselves to be wise," the Greek philosophers and their students, were among the most flagrant examples and those best known to St. Paul and his readers.)

But now he turns to the other class of men, as if

apostrophizing one of his Roman readers who had not been brought up in that great estrangement from God of the religion of idolatry, but in the light of Moses' law, and who had listened with approval to his account of the most of mankind, yet was himself worldly and impenitent (II. 1, &c.):—"Therefore *thou* art inexcusable, O man! whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things; . . . (6-16) who will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality—eternal life; but unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath—tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil; of the Jew (like you) first, and also of the Gentile—for there is no respect of persons with God—but glory, honor and peace to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, (for he has had in the Old Testament earlier advantages for this) and also to the Greek (if he is penitent and pious), for there is no respect of persons with God.

"For as many as have sinned without (a written) law (literally "lawlessly") shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned in (with knowledge of) the law (written) shall be judged by that law. For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when (if, or if ever) the (heathen) nations, (*not* "Gen-

tiles," as individuals), which have not the law (written), do by nature (no written Word of God renewing for them the law of primitive religion) the very things contained in that law, these having not that law, are a law unto themselves (that is, the original knowledge of God and of man's duty stills remains among them in a partial and indefinite way, in traditions and religious practice, and their political law as derived from these), who show (by these remains of virtue) the work of the law (the actual power of God's will as the law for men) written in their hearts (living in their very thoughts), their self-judgment also bearing witness in the day when God shall judge the world, and their thoughts then among themselves accusing or else excusing one another."

It thus appears that this is not said of all men alike as knowing merely from their own thoughts all that they ought to do. What is said is expressly limited to the heathen nations, and as what will be disclosed by his thoughts and memory to each man of them in the day of Judgment. Nor is this at all according to the notion of a "*conscience*" in each man's soul telling him infallibly what he ought to do; a notion found not at all in God's Word, but suggested in some of the old heathen philosophies and adopted fully in modern Christian philosophy.

He then returns directly to the worldly Israelite whom he was before convicting of his equal need with the Pagans of salvation through the Lamb of God, and says, (vv. 17, 18), "Behold thou art called a

Jew and retest in the law and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His will and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law. . . . (v. 23). Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking of the law dishonorest thou God? . . . (vv. 25-27). But if thou be a breaker of the law thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore, if the uncircumcision (should) keep the righteousness of the law (without reading God's will in His Word, actually *do* it; while thou readest but doest it not), shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature (where no written Word of God renews the primitive religion) if it fulfill that law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? . . . (Chap. iii. 1). What advantage then *hath* the Jew? and what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way, because that unto them *were* committed the *oracles* of God, (the later words of God repeating His will). . . . (vv. 9, 10). What then? Are we (Jews) better (than the Gentiles)? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin: As it is written, There is *none* righteous: no, *not one*," etc.

I have only space here to add to what needs, and I hope may yet receive a much fuller treatment, that these last powerful words (as in substance also those of Chap. i.) prove that those of Chap. ii. 14, 26 and 27, can only be rightly understood, not as affirming that any Gentiles did in fact perform God's

will as being "a law unto themselves"; but that even *if they had*, it would have been as they knew it by traces in their traditions and laws, of His first Word to man.

APPENDIX D.

EXTRACTS FROM A REVIEW IN DETAIL OF A BOOK
ENTITLED "THE REIGN OF LAW."

(It has been impracticable to find room here for the whole of this review, which may appear at length in a later publication.)

IT was a great task which the author set himself, viz: to show the people of our time that "Science" does not forbid us to have Christian faith. It would not be fair to censure any one merely for imperfect success in that undertaking. But if the real result were upon the whole to obscure the glorious vision of God in all things, no pains should be spared to expose this. The more the writer's name commanded readers and their ready assent, the more the book was commended by those whose authority would carry it, and confidence in it, into the multitude of docile readers whom otherwise it would not reach, the more direct and complete should this criticism be.

The book is much more easy and pleasant reading than some others upon like subjects. This is no small element of influence. Some things are finely said, and even rise to eloquence of expression. In "illustrations" of the argument, entertaining information is sometimes given, and questions of physical science or political economy argued with much in-

genuity. But as *illustrations*, what can they be worth when they illustrate nothing true?

Before examining the book in detail, I mention some cardinal errors that spoil it all. 1st. An incorrect and ambiguous use of the terms "law," "laws," &c. 2d. An assumption that all which can exist or be an object of thought, is either "Matter" or "Mind." 3d. In a certain accord with this, the glorious *Person* of God, especially as in Himself *love*, and to *be loved*, is kept out of sight. 4th. Taking no notice of the way in which God has placed *His Word* among men. 5th. The author's favorite conception of God as being under a certain necessity from "Law" and its "Reign," and as in all that He does only wisely contriving and combining results in the use of eternal forces; no more in fact than an immense man.

The author of "The Reign of Law," would probably say in answer to criticism under the 3d and 4th heads, that he had anticipated it in his preface to the first edition, postponing a chapter on "Reign of Law in Christian Theology" because he "shrunk from entering upon questions so profound, of such critical import, and so connected with religious controversy." Each of these is a reason why he should have "shrunk from" his present argument, which by its religious defects is in result irreligious. In the preface to the fifth edition he finally abandons the projected chapter, and admits that its absence is a very serious defect in the argument. This seems almost to disarm censure in advance.

But it is the readers, the ill effect upon them, and not the author, who are most to be considered. Not that we complain of the want of this other "chapter," which would probably have been as erroneous as the rest. The actual fatal defect is that in an attempted argument for Christian faith, which we do have, these and other faults pervading it all, put it among the books which upon the whole impair faith.

The first chapter is entitled "Of the Supernatural." It is devoted to casting out this word from use. The argument, which is somewhat rambling and confused, is founded upon the mere false notion of a "reign of law." According to it nothing is supernatural because everything is "natural." This mighty war, as *between* words, might be passed over without notice were that all. Though indeed if this author is right, we must recast many of the most valuable writings of modern times. Were it upon the verbal question only, I should rather agree with M. Guizot, that most unprejudiced and profound thinker, than with the Duke of Argyll. Let any one of my readers attempt to correct all his best reading by this decision of the latter (p. 50.): "The truth is there is no such distinction between what we find in Nature and what we are called upon to believe in religion, as that which men pretend to draw between the Natural and Supernatural. It is a distinction purely artificial, arbitrary and unreal;" and he will be surprised at the result. Go, reader, and revise by this canon what has been written by the wisest of men concerning faith in God, and see.

what names you must insult, and what books you must mutilate and disfigure.

But indeed it is not a mere matter of words. It is a precise *inversion* of the truth of religion. For instance, we are told (p. 30.) that "we must remember that the language of Scripture nowhere draws, or seems even conscious of the distinction which modern philosophy draws so sharply between the Natural and the Supernatural. All the operations of Nature are spoken of as operations of the Divine Mind." Now *we* have just (Chaps. VII. and VIII.) been making a real and thorough examination of Holy Writ. And we have found that it "nowhere seems even conscious" of "Nature" or "the Natural" at all. We might rather say that in it all things are described as *Supernatural*.

In truth this writer is wandering in a "vicious circle"; beginning with the assumption of his cherished notion of a "reign of law," and with his inferences from it proceeding to prove what he really began with. His own personal belief in God's Word remains, and so he actually proceeds to fortify his arguments by classifying under this "reign of law" the most sublime mysteries of Divine Love; as for instance, p. 51, "The Divine Mission of Christ," &c., and p. 52, "'It behoved Him,' etc. Whatever *more* there may be in such passages," &c. Wise faith is shocked at this, but must try to excuse it as of the habits of a false theology.

Yet on the very same page he fancies himself looking down upon "all theologies" from a higher

point of view. And thus he discourses of them: "Perhaps it is not too much to say that the manifest decay which so many creeds and confessions are now suffering arises mainly from the degree in which at least the popular expositions of them dissociate the doctrines of Christianity from the analogy and course of Nature. There is no such severance in Scripture," etc., etc.

On the contrary we have already seen that Holy Scripture knows nothing of "Nature" in his sense. But what does he mean by "creeds" and their "decay"? Is he speaking (which would be the only accurate use of the term) of those brief statements of "the faith once for all delivered to the" Church of God 1800 years ago, and professed by all Christendom in those words with scarce any exception for at least 1500 years? Does he at least include those creeds, without which his words represent nothing worthy of notice? In what respect are these creeds now suffering any "manifest decay"? How can they, being of that truth which can never grow old or pass away, as will this visible "Nature"?

If he means that *men's faith* in the Divine truth decays because "popular expositions" of it do not proceed upon his method of referring all things to "Nature" and the "Reign of Law," in this they follow the example of Holy Scripture. But just such references to the visible world around us in teaching religion as the Blessed Scriptures, and above all as Our Most Blessed Lord's example suggests to us, are quite common even in the less thoughtful "popular

expositions." There is still a great deal of hearty faith left, and it is found most among those who know least about this scientific "Nature"; while its dangerous decay is to be seen among those who give most attention to that, and those who are most influenced by their ideas.

"CHAP. II. — Law, its Definitions." — This would seem at last to introduce us to the main argument. Yet it opens thus, not with definitions, but with a mere assumption of the very thing to be proved: "The Reign of Law—is this then the reign under which we live? Yes, in a sense it is, there is no denying it," etc., etc. But we are told next that "the men of Theology" (Christian believers? and especially God's own ambassadors?) find something in it not favorable to what they believe the highest truth. "They would erect a feeble barrier by defending the position that Science and Religion may be and ought to be kept entirely separate," etc. In this at last he notices the just instinct by which those who value and are in a measure responsible for the religious faith of their countrymen, perceive in this notion of the "reign of law" an enemy to that faith. But even when they ask that it will not invade the truth which is in their special charge, he has no sympathy with them. On the contrary he makes merry over their anxieties, and predicts their failure upon the plausible ground that every truth has "a right of way" in every other region of Truth. So religious belief must be made to accord with the "science" of

the time. "The endeavor to reconcile them is a necessity of the mind. We are right in thinking that if they are both indeed true, they can be reconciled," etc. Not so. He is a very shallow thinker who does not know that all the really greatest truths baffle all our attempts to reconcile them; which reminds us that God can tell man things too great for his comprehension.

How do we know this "Theology," as the Duke of Argyll is pleased to name the Divine truth of religion? By verbal communication from God. Is it then too much to ask that no sort or amount of such inferior knowledge as men can "by searching find out," shall be allowed to qualify or interpret that which is absolutely true? And is this reconciling to be *all* in that direction? Or may I assert this "blessed right of way" of my heavenly truth of religion to enter the domain of "Science" and dictate a change in some of its results? No one proposes that. In one place the author *seems* to admit that this must be allowed with the other claim. But when you look carefully at his sentence, there is no such right allowed to the truth that *comes from Heaven*; only one sort of human discovery must exchange civilities with another. Thus: "It may be that some proud generalization of the schools is having its falsehood proved by" (—what?—the most august and perfect Word of God? No!—) the violence it does to the deepest instincts of our spiritual nature. Now we do not obtain these "doctrines of religion" from any man's argument of what are

our "deepest instincts," but as God Himself has taught us.

The English Professor and clergyman of whom he speaks (p. 60) seems to have been a much wiser lover of the truth than his censor. Following his science in its conclusions intellectually, when it contradicted his faith, he did not renounce that faith; but knowing it was fixed upon higher grounds of absolute truth, he ascribed the contradiction to the limit of human intelligence. This is right. A scientific conclusion which is against the Word of God is simply an intellectual *illusion*; harmless if so understood, and not allowed to interfere with our faith, even perhaps a useful mental exercise, an enigma which may (or may not) find solution in the other life when we are forever in the presence of the eternal truth which we now know by faith.

(P. 63). He distinguishes "Law" in five different senses, and yet throughout the whole book it occurs incessantly and interchangeably in all these senses, and without any suggestion or guide to the reader as to which he means. Nor is this Proteus content only to astonish and confuse us with these sudden changes of costume. He multiplies them by variations, as sometimes "Law" or "Laws"; as "law" and "laws"; as "laws of Nature" and "Natural laws," etc., etc. Indeed, an argument which marches with such an imposing display of abstract terms with capital initials, overawes the reader. Thus these 431 pages, among every few words of which tower "Law," "Nature," "Force," "Matter,"

"Mind," "Science," "Personality," "Power," "Will," "Order," "Adjustment," "Contrivance," "Organization," &c., is like the army of an Indian prince, in which the huge elephants with their gorgeous trappings seem to forbid resistance more than ten thousands of soldiery.

This rhetorical artifice is certainly not favorable to clearness of thought, since the mind is kept in doubt as to whether these words mean facts, abstractions or persons. There is superadded irreverence when "Mind," which has all along been otherwise used, suddenly presents itself apparently to represent the Most Glorious and Blessed One.

As for his five "great, leading significations" of *law* in the scientific use, the division is highly artificial, and throws no light upon the main question. The whole five are really contained so far as that word can be used in this inexact and figurative sense, (see Chap. XVII. of "the Reign of God," concerning the real and essential meaning of *law*) in the first; that is, a "law of Nature is an observed order of facts." (This could be fully shown, did space allow, by a minute examination of what he says of "the Law of Gravitation, the best illustration of what law is and what it is not").

P. 69. We are told that the Law of Gravitation "is *that Force* which compels those movements, etc.," and that "Force is the root-idea of Law in its scientific sense." In fact the writer does in this same

obscure and obscuring way use these terms Law and Force interchangeably. Why then does he not always, or even *ever*, express his doctrine according to its "root-idea," and call it the "Reign of *Force*"?

P. 89. He goes quite out of his way to rebuke any who are so *theological* as to call the chief scientific adversaries of religious belief, *atheists*. He seems rather to resent such an intrusion into the select company in which he and others converse in the "dry light" of science, into which none of the warmth or color of religious faith is admitted. Yet the critic of Prof. Huxley, in the instance given, did that eminent naturalist and elegant writer no injustice in calling what he said "an honest avowal of atheism," even if he was not conscious of it. It is fortunate that there are Christian writers who see much farther into these things than the Duke of Argyll. The man now in Christendom who confronts this sentence of our faith (1 St. John v. 20) "We *know* that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may *know* Him," with dismissing all this to "the unknown and the unknowable," is an atheist, even though he rejects what he derisively calls "speculative atheism."

The great matter is *practical* atheism. It is much the same whether a man says that he can prove that there is no such person as the one absolute and most true Person, or says that he does not and cannot know *that* there is such a Person. This latter sort of atheists is much the more dangerous in our time.

It includes many more persons, not only as they thus escape the "popular odium" of which the Professor speaks, but because it suits better the worldly and self-sufficient spirit of "modern thought." Therefore, whoever teaches it from a place of great influence over men's opinions, ought, at least, to be described as the atheist he is; not to punish him with "popular odium," but for truth's sake, and in loving pity for his darkened and imperilled soul.

Pp. 105-107. The author notices and rather makes merry over the objection to his argument that it is "Anthropomorphism." The word is nothing, be it "very long" or very short. But the objection made, even though in this case by an unbeliever against a Christian, is seriously true. It is humiliating to notice that it is the former who says that "the Universal Mind is essentially other than the Human Mind," and the latter who (adding, without right or reason, his own gloss—"so that no recognizable relations can exist between them") replies, "Then that Universal Mind is to us as if it were not." That indeed would triumphantly justify the philosophers of "the unknowable." It would also deny the essential *omnipotence* of the Blessed Eternal One, insisting that He cannot make a creature who can know Him, unless He make the creature every way His counterpart!

The author's favorite proposition, served up to us again and again in different forms, is, as on p. 100, "Every law of Nature is liable to counteraction, and

the rule is that laws are habitually made to counter-act each other." Yet afterwards he observes with approval the actual glimpse which some students of "Nature" have got of a great Divine truth which excludes any "reign of law," and says (p. 122), "Science, &c., is already getting something like a firm hold of the idea that all kinds of force are but *forms or manifestations of some one Central Force,*" &c. How absurd then is it to repeat as a discovery and demonstration that the Great God is playing off against one another a vast *number* of forces (which do not exist) to do His Will, when that very Will is the one only Force that does exist. Yet only three pages after his own virtual admission of the error, he repeats it (p. 125) in this even exaggerated form—"What we call natural consequence is always the conjoint effect of an *infinite number of elementary forces,*" &c.

"CHAP. III.—Contrivance a necessity arising out of the Reign of Law," &c.

The whole force of this chapter for the argument is in the first two or three pages. The rest of it about the flight of birds might or might not be true and useful without any effect upon the question of a "reign of law." Yet any one following the book and this review of it with that pure and holy fear of God, the beginning of wisdom (especially in all knowledge of *Him*), and still having any doubt about that question, can see what is here rightly deduced from a "reign of law": "the *necessity of contrivance.*"

For whom? For man in his little inventions and uses of what God is perpetually doing? No, but for "the Will which works in Nature," by which he means God Almighty—the Absolute One. The whole attempted argument is, that because we all see that men must contrive, therefore (p. 127) "Nothing is more certain than that the whole order of Nature is one vast system of contrivance."

In simple truth, what in His works *seems like* our contrivance *cannot be* such, because He is God and not a creature. We contrive by studying and making use of certain objects and movements (or forces, if any one prefer that word) around us, which are what they are not at all by our will or action, but by acting Will altogether outside of and above us. Compare this with the acts of Him who makes and moves all at once by His will, which will is the one and only real *force*, while the "many forces" are only various instances of that *as it appears to us*.

As for the attempted argument (p. 127, &c.) from a few poetical sentences of the old prophets, it is very "curious" indeed if Holy Writ can be justly referred to in favor of the modern and unchristian notion of a "Reign of Law." I have already shown (see Chaps. VI. and VII.) by a full and careful examination of all the Holy Scriptures, that they teach the exact opposite of "this idea," and so, of course, have no "correspondence" whatever with it. Those "great seers of the Old Testament" never use this expression of "the operations of Nature" or anything like it, and evidently have no such notions.

Does some one still ask, How, then, do *you* account for these appearances of "design" or "contrivance" in the works of God? How can you reject this theory unless you propose a better one? It may be wisest for us to have no such theories. "Canst thou by searching find out God?" Why the "flower that blushes unseen"? "To what purpose is this waste" of beauty and life for which we can give no account? I have a sure negative theory of it all. It was certainly *not* that we might reason from it what is unspiritual and irreligious, as for instance a "Reign of Law." When we can find no other meaning of what God does than that, let us retire with dismay from our reasonings; let us only wonder and wait and adore. There is one purpose of His in all, which we know from Himself, and that is *love*. And so it is at least a reasonable and innocent conjecture, that these wonderful adjustments may be meant to give man the very exquisite pleasure which they in fact excite in the investigation, to suggest to him that *he may* by inventions use the things created around him—above all, to kindle his wondering adoration.

"CHAPTER IV.—Apparent exceptions to the Supremacy of Purpose."

Observe that in the very title of this chapter we have another king introduced. Just now it was the "Reign of Law," under which all things were: now it is "the Supremacy of Purpose." One who rests quietly with faith upon the supremacy of *God* has no need of pages of labored argument for that. He

knows that He who has all power has loving purpose in all He does; that it is also of God's goodness that he, the humble loving creature, can in some measure see that purpose: so far as it is beyond his sight, he believes in it none the less.

Pp. 188-194. The writer proceeds to discourse upon "ornament," or as I should prefer to say, *beauty*, in the works of God, and to apply it to his argument. Here again we have a partial and distorted view of a great truth and mystery, dogmatized upon and therefore chilled, dwarfed and debased to make a part of his notion of the "Reign of Law." One might have thought that this at least would not be included in the mechanical.

It is true that the Great One is all beauty and glory, and so pours forth in His works a measureless profusion of what we must admire and enjoy with the senses he has given us, whenever we perceive it, and which extends far beyond what man does or can see. But to say (as in R. of L. p. 189): "It is certain enough that the gift of ornament has not been lavished as it is lavished for the mere admiration of mankind," is mere gratuitous and presumptuous assertion. How is anything of God's purposes "certain" to us except as He tells it? But he goes on to say: "It would be to doubt the evidence of our senses and of our reason, or else to assume hypotheses of which there is no proof whatever, if we were to doubt that *mere ornament, mere variety*, are as much an end and aim in the workshop of Nature, as they are known to be in the workshop of

the goldsmith and the jeweler. Why should they not?" Why indeed if there be a person "Nature," busy in her "workshop"? But to one who knows the true God and is speaking of "His wonderful works," the question answers itself in another sense.

So far as we know, God makes the multiform and multitudinous beauty of things to move His spiritual creatures with delight and with love for Him. There is no occasion then for any one to say: "But do you not know that countless instances of this beauty never have been, and never can be seen by men? To what purpose is this waste? We must discover the purpose."—Not so. It is not for us to find out God by such presumptuous searching: least of all to use the riches of His goodness in such a way as to remove His adorable and beloved Person into a misty distance of abstract words, such as "Mind," "Purpose," "Contrivance" or "Law."

And yet His infinite greatness suggests, and His love allows and encourages a devout conjecture of purpose in this vast profusion of beauty; namely, that as one thing is as easy as another for Him—neither time, nor space, nor number, nor thought having any suggestion of limit to Him,—He makes beauty for us in such infinite wealth beyond our personal appropriation, so that besides what we actually see we may get glimpses of a measureless extent of it beyond. This may raise us to a juster sense of what He is, and kindle more and more that adoring love of Him in which our real life consists.

"CHAPTER V.—Creation by Law." What is the object of this chapter? Is it to disprove "Creation by Law," or to maintain it? What is "Creation by Law"? These are fair questions for any one to ask, after he has read the chapter as attentively as possible. To say the least, it will be some time before he can answer them. The most that he can say to the first is, that the writer does believe in "Creation by Law," and does not—according to certain distinctions of meaning which are not very clear. This brings us at once to the other question, which is the main one, and should have been answered by our author at the outset, whereas he never does confront it.

In truth, the absurd ambiguity of the phrase forbids any real argument. The whole meaning turns upon the little word "by." Is it "Law, the Creator," or "Law, the method or means used by the Creator," which we are arguing about? Of this the writer gives us certainly no distinct intimation. We might rather suppose that he intends the former sense, as only then is there a question claimed to be raised between Christian "scientists" and Mr. Darwin and others. Besides, who should "reign" but the Creator?—and if "Law" reigns, why did or does it not create? Let us not be told in reply that figures of speech must not be pressed to such conclusions. Is this "Reign of Law," then, but a mere metaphor? Have we here 400 pages of scientific illustration and labored argument to show that this phrase can be used as a figure of speech?

Or, if the book be all a rhapsody, let us know that. It is just to the writer to reject that supposition. His pretension is to serious argument; to facts, science, and the supreme truth. So it is right to insist that if "Law" can have a universal "reign," can be a king "of all things visible and invisible," it can be their Creator.

"Creation by Law" is, in this first sense, absurd; but so precisely is the "Reign of Law." The common sense of the matter lies in small compass. "Law" is no person; and yet Creation is more essentially *personal* action than anything else we can conceive of. Some men's minds may be so perverse and insane* as not to see this. But we who have this "light of knowledge," must not try to be insane in that way, in order to "get upon common ground" and reason with such persons. "Law" in its use in all science is only an abstract term to express our observation of the usual order of facts. Can an order of facts observed by us create the very things of whose succession to one another it is only our expression?

But if the writer has been in all this chapter discussing "Creation *by means of or in the method of Law*," (supposing the One only and true Creator,) the absurdity is as certain, though not so plain upon the surface. He does not state this, nor even then say or show whether he is for or against this sort of "Creation." The same fatal ambiguity and false use of the word "Law" runs through it all; so that

* I use this term advisedly.

the refutation already made of the "Reign of Law" applies with even greater force to *every* kind of "Creation by Law." It is essentially contrary to the *truth* of One Self-Existent and Eternal Person: the "*one* Law-giver"—"the blessed and *only* Potentate." It presupposes something coeval with, external to, and independent of Him. Therefore simply by *believing in God*, we dismiss at once and together every sort of "Creation by," or "Reign of Law."

"CHAP. VI. — The Reign of Law in the realm of Mind." We have here two sorts of misuse of the word "mind," which can but produce indistinctness and confusion, and otherwise vitiate the reasoning. This term appears personified, and yet treated as any abstraction. What (or whom) does it then mean? Is it God (as sometimes really must be intended, for the argument on p. 275 means this if it means anything)—or the aggregate of men?—or each individual soul of them? We can so speak of Matter in the mass; but not of "Mind" without that great fact of *personal* existence, which is not only self-evident to ourselves, but is also of the essence of Religion.

A second misuse of "Mind" is the including under it all that is non-material in man. The word is simple enough. It means the intellectual and reasoning part of man. But it does not of itself include the affections and will, any more than it does the circulation of the blood. Will and love are not

mere apprehensions of fact or thought. They are a great part of the human person: the greatest — much above mere knowing and thinking. The author of "The Reign of Law" seems to have no conception of that *three-fold* nature of man which was the idea of the first Christians, and believed by them (I think correctly) to be suggested in Holy Writ, and in which the deepest thinkers of our day seem to concur. He follows entirely a dull and unspiritual philosophy of the 18th century, which could never get beyond this account of "all things visible and invisible," (including the very Eternal Creator Himself,) — "Matter and Mind."

Even if we suppose only a dual division of the human nature, to designate the non-material part as "Mind" is a very unfortunate mistake. A low mentalism is scarcely above a low materialism. It is setting up an opinion of man's nature that has no correspondence with the language of "God's Word written," but is "rather repugnant" thereto. It suggests speaking of the Eternal Spirit as "Mind," (which this author in fact does) which He Himself never does, nor anything corresponding to it. It implies that our mere *knowing* is the chief and even the only essential part of spiritual being, which is directly contrary to our wisest reflection and plainly opposed to the loving Word of God. That teaches us, and our true reason assents, that the choosing, feeling, and loving power is our greatest part; that the intellectual must be subjected to this in devotion to God: otherwise we are merely more selfish,

really ignorant, and degraded below our original and ideal excellence, the more we use our intellect.

(It is necessary here to omit, with much else, a careful examination of the author's arguments about the connection of mind with body, and the special functions of the brain, also what he says of free-will. The substantial truth about this last has been already stated in Chap. X.)

But does not this author recognize a great difference between human and brute nature? Yes, in degree, but not in kind. As his real notion of God is of an infinite man, so his notion of man is of an infinite brute. Thus, p. 300: "In man analogous facts appear, modified by his infinitely wider range of character, and the infinite degrees in which the different elements of mind are capable of being mixed in him." This absurd misuse of "infinite" is parallel with that of "eternal," by the poet whom he cites (p. 286 and elsewhere) with a reverent faith, as if Mr. Tennyson's transcendental obscurities were the absolute truth; but allowing the most that can avail where that defence may be applied, there is no excuse here in poetic license. It is not a mere inelegance of language, but obscures the truth, that God only is infinite.

P. 301 he says: "We can see that the actions and opinions of men, *which are the phenomena of Mind*, do range themselves in an observed order, etc. On the recognition of such causes the Philosophy of History depends; and upon that recognition depends not less the possibility of applying to the exigencies

of our own time and of our own society a wise and successful legislation." Here we have a glimpse of the "hereditary legislator" of whom we shall later get a very full view. What really is this "Philosophy of History" beyond a few barren abstractions, except some one of the prejudiced theories of government and politics which the particular historian may choose to maintain? When it is that of the British Whig doctrinaire, it is no doubt very satisfactory to himself; but it has no more proved and acknowledged truth beyond his party than any other part of its "platform," as the American party-man would say.

"CHAP. VII.—Law in Politics."—This chapter has a really practical and sensible title, quite unlike the vague and really unmeaning headings of most of the others. "Law in Politics"—certainly. As the real meaning of Law includes God's will and commands to men, as also those rules which civil societies make for their members; so the latter, especially as they should be a reflection of the former, may be evidently if not elegantly described as "Law in Politics." But the writer does not mean this, but only that what he erroneously calls "Law" in all else—a vast mechanical combination of automatic forces—does everything also in legislation and government.

Yet would not his own experience teach him that in the making of real laws men are responsibly free, and not the mere puppets of an inexorable necessity?

In this suggestion we may perhaps find the reason why this work is crowned with a demonstration of "Law in Politics." It is not that we have again a "self-denying ordinance" of hereditary legislators, this time announcing that they who *make* laws have no merit in it, being moved thereto by invariable forces from without. No; it is the subjects of law who are in this case. Our author is of the few who study these "Natural laws," and so are able adroitly and diligently to play them off against one another, and thus govern the many.

The object of the present writer in calling attention to this is not at all to deride, but to *understand* the Duke of Argyll, and so lay open his real thought to others. And only thus can we account for this last chapter which has little connection with what precedes. Two or three great errors pervade it all. The first of these is that the writer has no vision of the great fact that all human government is derived from God; has no authority except as His "minister," and ought to enquire for and do *His Will* in all it does. The second cardinal fact of politics which I may reverently say "is like unto it," is that God's laws for men given in His Word are the best and indispensable guide in both the making and executing of human laws. Above all should good government apply always the two great laws of love, which are the most *practical* and perfect suggestion of all human conduct. There is no notice of these in the whole chapter, whether from having no thought of them in this application, or from fear of being sen-

timental or theological in such a matter-of-fact thing as government.

But then if we could leave out of our view of Politics in any high sense, the authority and the written will of God, what is the purpose of it as regards men? What is government for? Passing by foreign politics, which is merely incidental to the main purpose, first, the safety of subjects in life, person, and property, and the settlement of disputes between them; secondly, to regulate trade and provide certain general conveniences, as roads, post-offices and the like. It is a question whether the latter is within the just power of Law. There is no question that the former is chief and essential. Yet this is the part of politics to which our author's argument makes no sort of reference! In fact it is only "the blessedness of commerce" and "the wealth of nations" which are recognized as of importance in the discussion. This is a very low and a very narrow sense of Politics, and of itself makes the whole treatment meager.

P. 325. "And here we come on a great subject: the function of Human Law as distinguished from Natural Law," etc. In this whole passage there is an absurd reversal of actual relations. How is it a great subject to distinguish things which have nothing in common but a word misapplied to one of them? not as much as *penny-post* and *military-post*? "Human Law" is real law; "Natural Law" is no law at all; but a figurative phrase used in modern science, so misleading from truth that it ought in

the scientific use at least to be incessantly explained as such, or better, entirely abandoned. One would think from this author that the illusive trope was the original, and the reality the figure.

Thus his *entire* idea of Human Law is "the collective Will of Society" (p. 326), instead of the interpretation of the blessed Will of God as to certain duties of men to one another. This low notion of a "social compact," though some religious men have patronized it, is essentially and in necessary result irreligious. He rightly claims the honor of it for "modern times." Before the traditionary truths of mankind were so much effaced by "wisdom of this world," even corrupt religions held fast the truth that Divine will was a necessary part of human politics; only they misapplied it. That we "know the true God" requires us to purify and apply it more than ever. Yet this Christian writer exults in the idea of founding Human Law upon the "Laws of Nature," as being the greatest modern and final victory over the errors of all the past. If he or his apologists say that these "Laws of Nature" are the Will of God as they have discovered it, why not say that? why not call them laws of God? Why banish the thought of *His personal Will* from the expression? It is because they are not thinking of Him, but of their own imagined discoveries, their false "Reign of Law."

There is a direct communication from Himself of His "good and acceptable and perfect Will." It concerns directly all great matters of politics, which

belong among the moral acts of men, and illuminates all its minor topics as nothing else can. Yet this writer has not a word or a hint about it in his discussion of law in politics. Neglect of this even impairs his view of history. For as he discusses this with much about the Greeks, and especially Aristotle, he has not a word for a certain well-known nation with a remarkable system of laws for a thousand years before Aristotle, in which the direct will of God was rightly recognized as the true "Law in Politics."

Later on (p. 332) we find him setting in contrast the follies of ancient politics with the wisdom of modern. He quotes Dugald Stewart with approval, thus: "The one great error of ancient systems of political philosophy that the natural desire of men for the accumulation of wealth is an evil, etc. How opposite is the doctrine of modern politicians their great aim is to open new sources of national opulence," &c.

In this, indeed, he only follows all the leaders of what is now called the science of Political Economy, assuming even, what they do not, that this is the chief affair of Politics. But there is a greater fault here for a champion of Christian belief. He not only talks (see p. 332) of the "blessedness of Commerce," while he has no such epithets for, and no mention at all of, "weightier matters of the law"; but, without caution or qualification, he mentions and affirms this wisdom of "modern nations" in these words: "They never held the *absurd doctrine*

that Nature was wrong when she taught men to desire wealth," etc. There is no excuse for this rude and irreverent contradiction in express words of Him who is the wisest and kindest friend of men, who, though Sovereign Lord, condescended to be one of us, that He might be "the Light of the world."

For no matter how repugnant this may be to opinions and *passions* of civilized men, or how ready many Christian writers may be with comments upon the sacred words to show that they do allow what men are so desirous to do, it is no less certain that He said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth," and warned them against "the deceitfulness of riches"; as also that He inspired one afterward to say in His name that "the love of money is the root of all evil." I repeat then that it is rude and irreverent for any Christian writer to speak of "the *absurd doctrine* that Nature was wrong when she taught men to desire wealth," and that such treatment of Our Lord's words will do more harm to the faith of others than any arguments for faith which he thinks he is making, can do good. It may be that the general ideas of Political Economy can be shown not to contradict these holy words; but this must be shown positively. And all loving honor and careful reverence for them must be shown by whoever has to mention things which certainly at first sight, and most certainly as above expressed, do not accord with those words. And it is also certain that if upon any ground we promote the love and pursuit of riches among men, we must take at least

equal pains at the same time to impress them with the warnings against spiritual harm of which they then stand in jeopardy.

What follows for many pages is a really interesting account of the growth of manufactures in England, and of legislation about their work-people. His attempt to connect this with his notion of a "Reign of Law" is futile. Upon that theory the hard men who opposed all interference with their gains, by law in behalf of their workmen, were right. It was no figment of "Natural Law" which brought this protection against oppression — this check to the political economy which was making a few "mill-owners" very rich, and thousands of men, women and children haggard and weak, ignorant and wicked. No, it was some conviction of a *real law*, the law of love which God has given us all in original tradition, and responding consciousness; but most of all in Christ's glorious Gospel.

We have not a word of this here, but only (as p. 356, &c.) a sort of physico-metaphysical argument about "Freedom" and "Will," and a "true and a false doctrine of Necessity." It shows the blindness and folly of this mechanical and commercial idea of "Law in Politics," that he attributes the degradation of the factory work-people to *their* "instincts of labor, having for their *conscious purpose* the acquisition of wealth." It is his "love of gain" which with poor Muggins the saw-grinder "overrides even the love of life," and affectionate pity for his wife and children, so that he makes them as well as

himself grow prematurely old with incessant work, bad food and air, scanty clothing, much dirt, utter ignorance and no religion. So this natural and useful love of gain must be checked in him by the "Will of the Community in the form of Law," enacted by hereditary legislators and the *like*.

How little this intelligent and well-intending man comprehends the life and needs of his poor countrymen. Muggins and his fellows hope for nothing from their incessant labor but a miserable living, and dare not let it go for a day lest they lose that. There is a "love of gain" somewhere that has to do with their wretchedness, but it is not in *them*. They have their unhappy sins which Acts of Parliament have no force to "take away," the real blessed remedy for which the notion of a "Reign of Law" does its utmost to counteract.

P. 369, &c.—He exhibits to us among the "natural laws" or "forces" out of whose combined "Reign" we may work results in Politics, "the Spirit of Association." This is, as he describes it, merely a part of the vast machine of "Law," which the deep student and skilful manipulator, who is also a legislator (by inheritance or otherwise), can "contrive" and "adjust" with other forces to make people good and happy by statute, or merely persuade them to achieve the same by voluntary societies. This force, he says, is an instinct of self; but it can be guided by wise men for the good of all. Everything implies that to use this "force" to any great purpose belongs to the modern discovery of a "Reign of Law."

What then must we judge of the whole theory when we find this illustration of it (in which at last, for the first and last time, we have mention of that great *Divine* institution,—without accounting for which, for its influence everywhere actual, and much greater possible, any philosophy of human life and improvement, personal, social or political, would be fatally defective)? "The interests of Self, justly appreciated and rightly understood, may be, nay, indeed must be the interests also of other men, of society, of country, of *the Church*, and of the world." Is this meant to imply that the wonderful kingdom of God on earth is a human institution, one of the "adjustments" of the "Natural Law of Association"? Certainly this indifferent silence about it as a great power among men for good, shows that he does not recognize it as that society of men of which God is the Patron and His Son the ever-present Head, and in which are treasured all the spiritual interests of mankind.

Accordingly (p. 376) we learn that "two things are necessary to cure all political evils of our time," first, unshaken faith in (—*God*? and His means of grace to mankind? No, but) great Natural laws; and secondly, a faith not less assured in (—here at least we may hope for a mention of the almighty goodness; but no—) the free agency of Man, etc. Indeed the latter has no meaning here, as according to the notion of a "Reign of Law" free agency is an illusion; only a part of the movement of the "great Natural Laws." And almost as if to set this above and against the incarnate Word of God Himself, the

words above quoted are followed by a repetition in even stronger terms of what we have already noticed contradicting "what Our Lord Jesus Christ saith." "Thus the love of gain is an instinct implanted in the human mind, and the endeavor to suppress it has always been the violation of a Natural Law." Then indeed the Kingdom of Him Who said, "*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth*" intends the overthrow of these men's "Reign of Law;" and if so, that is my side forever.

The author's discussion of English legislation upon labor and the combinations of laborers is spoiled for any good effect by the same false philosophy. He thinks the "great science of Politics" much behind the others, and hopes for its great advancement in the direction he pursues. Whatever is high and true in Politics is not to be found by trying to make "a great science" of it, but by returning to the simplest principles of order, justice, and mercy; by illuminating it with all true religion; by making all jurisprudence and jurisdiction conform to the only true Law—the Will of the Only True God.

That would answer favorably the question whether modern nations are to run the career of all of old; and each like them and like a great tree, decay, die, and fall at last. The Duke of Argyll thinks not, because for some reasons (among which he does not mention or hint at the mighty Kingdom of Our Lord now among men), "that epoch has passed away." But is it to him only a Hebrew rhapsody which says: "The nation or kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish"?

APPENDIX E.

SOME REMARKS UPON "THE LAW OF LOVE AND LOVE AS A LAW" BY MARK HOPKINS, D. D., LL.D., &C.

HE who observes carefully will find everywhere and in most unexpected places marks of the abject slavery to this false notion of "law" which prevails in all modern reasoning upon questions of philosophy or religion. Even the more spiritual and free pilgrims towards Divine truth start off with this cumbersome burden on their back, like Bunyan's "Christian," fancying it a part of the living body, not as a hunchback's disfigurement either, but as a part of "the dignity of human nature."

To the present writer the most impressive and touching instance of this is in a book with the excellent title given above—"The Law of Love," &c. If there be any book which this age of Christendom needs more than anything else, it is one which, within moderate compass and in simple but powerful words, shall recall us all to the true *theory* and *practice* of a good life in Jesus Christ Our Lord according to *His own* great commandments. This author is also a most pure and amiable man, revered by hundreds of cultivated men as their wisest instructor. I notice this book also especially because, first, it refers to the "Reign of Law" in its "view of the immutability of law (the only correct one),"

and because it seems rather an attempt to supply the confessed defect of that book in not treating of "Law in Christian Theology."

Before I illustrate the whole subject by showing how the book of Dr. Hopkins is *not* the book we need, perhaps I ought rather to qualify my positive assertion of such a need. What is wanted is that Christian teaching—the making Christ's disciples of this and "all nations"—shall be full of the thought that the first and greatest duty of every human soul is to *love God* with all the heart, and then to love one's neighbor. It is just that first and greatest commandment that the new book upon "the Law of Love and Love as a Law" must have much and most to say about. Religious writing now-a-days does sometimes feebly urge this divine affection as being, if not imaginary and impossible, the highest *ornament* of a holy life, or a fine figure of speech to describe being very good otherwise. Now such a book as I have supposed might be a powerful help to call back the general teaching by God's ministers and general conscious effort by His people of this personal love for Him, the lack of which nothing else can supply.

The general mistake of the book appears upon its title-page: "The Law, &c., or *Moral Science*, theoretical and practical." Why should there be any "Moral Science"? We may allow of Physical or even Mental Science—the methodical statement of what men have so far discovered in these matters of knowledge, and as an assistance for further investi-

gation. But what is "morals"? Simply what a man ought to do under the second great commandment of Our Lord — to love his neighbor as himself. Is this something which men have discovered in their curiosity after truth, and to which they may go on to add by further discovery? Not at all. It is something which God tells them directly, which is of the real substance of their actual living, and which cannot rightly be separated from their religion. Then also He has organized among them a society with continual succession to remind them of these two inseparable matters, and to be their guide in questions of doubt about them.

Can we Christians also have a *science* of our duty? Possibly in one aspect of it as a cautious and reverent speculation about such questions as are not precisely defined in God's Word. Yet even then, in all experience, what is there to show of any good done by it? There has been some plain experience of harm from the self-sufficiency of men in such attempts at a science of morals. In truth the very Word of God warns us that such mingling of our speculations with Divine truth tends only to obscure it. Such science also invariably works to separate morals from religion in men's apprehension, and that *always* promotes irreligion. The severance is also in many ways unwholesome for good morals.

If we suppose what we *know* about this to have come to all men by information given to the first man, and coming down to all others by tradition, or by a moral instinct called "conscience," in either of

these ways in different parts or proportions ; still we know that it has been taught them completely by a later *Word of God*. This last also was not mere information dispersed in the world 2000 years ago, or only digested in a book ; but as we have noticed before, provided to be kept alive by the instructions and rites of a powerful society of its believers, in which God maintains a special perpetual presence, and provides that it shall continue by orderly succession in all the generations and communities of men. So far as the knowledge, and still more the practice of these duties is indispensable to men, this is thus provided for. If, then, any men thus favored should by irresponsible studies and writings, devise other means for this instruction, it could only confuse and mislead them away from the Divine method. I grant that when this just idea of the Church as God's school of duty—*Ecclesia docens*—disappears from the minds of even Christian men, such human contrivances to take its place are more natural. But that is one of the reasons why we ought all to return to that idea, clearly taught in the New Testament of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Compare this with a "moral science" as in the very case before us, intended and supposed to be most Christian. On the one hand we have a *book* with many chapters of doubtful assumptions, and (as they always would be to most learners,) obscure if not quite unintelligible reasonings, followed by other chapters of special directions of what we ought to do—too numerous to be called principles, and too

few to reach a hundredth part of our actual duties. On the other hand we have a vast association of men with God Himself, having representatives in every neighborhood and company of men, so that these may always know one another personally; speaking in each household to the smallest child, as well as gathering the little ones in companies, and teaching them duty to God and one's neighbor in a catechism very simple, yet profoundly wise: following them through all ages and stages of life here to its end with frequent teachings to us all of God's will and laws, and their application to each one's choices and acts, with a God's Book of which it is "witness and keeper," which it puts in all hands and refers to as perfect truth.

Thus a science of morals is not needed, and is of no use to men in helping them to *be* good,—to *do* their duties. But on the other hand it may hinder them in this by being taken as a substitute for the true means; or even if it be imagined a help to that, by confusing them with its artificial distinctions and false assumptions. Thus this author sets out with that same false notion of a "reign of law," which has been refuted in the present book. He proceeds at once to search for the "ground of obligation" of our duty. So he must find it not in the Supreme Will, but in some "law" which is at least equally *eternal* with that Will. He mentions ten "theories" of such obligation. One of these is the simple truth as God Himself teaches it to us all. He rejects and supposes that he refutes that, establishing his own

notion which is quite as unsatisfactory and obscure as any of the eight others.

Let us see how he disposes (p. 15) of the Divine *fact* that the Will of God is the highest conception and reason why we ought to do or desire anything. "According to an eighth system the will of God is the ground of obligation. We are, it is said, under obligation to do whatever He commands, simply because He commands it. Philosophically this is the same doctrine as that of Hobbes who referred everything to the will of the law-giver, or of the law-making power regarded simply as will and accompanied by power. The question is whether the will of any being taken by itself and without reference to those qualities and motives that lie back of will, can be the ground of obligation. It is true that the will of God is an infallible rule, and that we are to do unhesitatingly whatever He commands. It is true also that this can be said of no other will, whether of an individual or of any number of individuals however organized. It is this fact that the will of God is to be always and implicitly obeyed that gives the system now in question its plausibility. But are we to obey his will simply because it is His will, or from faith, that is, because we have adequate ground for implicit confidence that His will will always be determined by wisdom and goodness?"

We are here in the presence of a question surpassed by none other which human thought can compass. Let us therefore approach it with all loving and

religious humility which is our best wisdom. The great truth of what we should think of God and His will ought not to stand on the level of our reasonings. And thus in Appendix G. *infra*, I have ventured only to behold it, and exhibit it to others in a *meditation*, not an argument. But dealing with the arguments of a fellow-man, I may fairly show the inherent futility of them all by the example of the first. Two hundred years ago the atheist Hobbes argued that there is no absolute truth in religion, and no difference of right and wrong in principle for our conduct, but that whatever the despot or other legislature of our country should ordain by human law would be the true religion for us and the right thing to do. Dr. Hopkins says that this is "philosophically the same" as to know of no higher or so high reason for doing anything as simply to obey the blessed will of Him by whose will alone all else exists—we and these philosophers themselves—kings, senators and citizens,—by whose will alone men have any knowledge, sentiments or duties. Not only are these two neither "philosophically" nor in any other way "the same doctrine," but no two ideas are more opposed. The will of God is *sui generis*. Nothing else is comparable to it in authority, in power, in perfect knowledge of all persons and things, as being itself the cause of the occasions of our doing right, as being the very will of absolute and actual love.

In truth all actual religion is at last involved in this idea. If we fancy that we can go anywhere

back of this glorious Person, and find something to which He is in the minutest degree subject, we have so far "departed from the living God." I do not say that we can all, or possibly any of us really see Him in this His absolute and all-sufficient Self-Existence—Himself the Source and Purpose, "the Beginning and the Ending" of everything else good we can conceive of. But we can all with adoration and awe *believe* this, and in this worshipping love reject the thought of anything great or good except as what He chooses shall be.

Is it indeed "the *question* whether the will of *any* being taken by itself, &c., can be the ground of obligation"? We do ourselves great wrong (Him we cannot affect in His infinite greatness), if we think of God with such comparisons. He is not "*any* being" for such reasoning. With all other persons we may, and must "consider qualities and motives that lie back of will." They are all our fellow-creatures, sharing with us that little range of will which He has allowed to us all (we fellow-men having great common faults of character), and only such little power and authority as He has distributed to them in order that they may *do His will*. He is the "One law-giver." "Of Him, and to Him, and through Him are all things; to whom be glory forever."

But the writer as a good man to whom that Will of God is law, hastens to declare that it is in fact an "*infallible rule*" for a man to act by; not because it is the reason for our obedience, but because it

always agrees with that true reason. This he says "gives the system now in question (meaning that simple and complete account of all goodness which God Himself has given us: as when Our Lord said—"he that doeth the Will of God the same is *my brother*," &c.)—its *plausibility*. Plausibility indeed! One might better talk of the plausibility of the Ten Commandments. His notion is that we ought to do our duties from some great eternal reasons, that what God wishes of us is always according to those eternal reasons, and so His will is a safe *guide* to such duty. But let any one take the pains to examine in Holy Scripture the many directions to obey God's Will, and allusions to it in mentioning our various duties, and he will see that while *not one* suggests the other account of it, a hundred imply that the one and sufficient reason why we should do God's will is simply because *it is His will*.

This also confutes the author's false notion that there is no place for *faith* in God, unless that we thus have "adequate ground for implicit confidence that His will will always be determined by wisdom and goodness." His will *determines* all things, and *is* wisdom and goodness. When we are most wise and loving we can find nothing higher than the mere will of God, nothing else so high. And is there nothing then left for religious faith? Is it then, as Dr. H. says, "impossible"? He makes no attempt to prove this extraordinary assertion either from the reason of the thing or from Holy Scripture. We, however, will not leave it so, but will briefly note what God

does teach us of faith by our reason and experience and a few plain sentences, out of many such, in His Word written.

And, first, we cannot *begin* any true religion which is the very life for which God made us, without faith in Him. "He that *cometh* unto God must believe that *He is*"—is *what* He is essentially ; therefore to be so loved and obeyed that we can conceive of no other so high reason for doing anything as that it is His will. Not but what the Good One accepts our poor obedience when other motives mix with what is the true and highest, and even when that last is hardly in our thoughts. But that true and highest motive we must be always endeavoring to recognize and follow. And so men would much more in fact if the moral and religious teaching of our day were not so lamentably silent about the personal duty of loving God. And at last, in the place and life of "perfect love," He will reward us with the immediate vision and enjoyment of this in all we do.

And cannot one who knows no higher reason for doing God's will than that it is *His will*, have faith as a degraded and guilty creature to confide in the Redemption of Our Lord ? to rise above the pleasures and possessions of the brief present, and patiently to endure its sorrows ? to be spiritual instead of worldly and animal, walking "by faith and not by sight" ? to *love* the invisible God and that much greater part of our neighbors whom we never see ?

On the other hand not once in Holy Writ is it said or suggested that the will of God is our *rule* of

conduct, because we have faith "that His will will always be *determined* by wisdom and goodness." Yet there are forty of the clearest and strongest sentences, which present our doing the will of God from the heart as the greatest achievement of a man; and even that man who "was God" said simply, "My *meat* is to do the will of Him that sent me." All exists for that "good pleasure," whether it *know* and *choose* that purpose or not. It is *our* distinction, as God has made us in His glorious image, to do His will with knowledge and of loving choice.

Why even as between fellow-creatures we can conceive and even know as a fact that one can be so devoted to another in love as to live only for him and to be happy only in doing what he wishes. Such an affection may in fact always fall short of our ideal conception, and is indeed very likely to excite contempt. But why? Because the one so loved is at the best so little and imperfect. But when it is one of us thus loving the Unapproachable and Perfect ONE, the only sorrow is in our present coming short, and our aspirations may soar without a check in the endless future which extends before and above us.

With this all the Word of God is in clear and beautiful accord. The first and great *law* is to *love* Him. Such love aspires above all, and *including all*, to know and to do what He wishes. It glows in all those mighty sayings of Holy Writ which bid us "*do all to the glory of God.*" Whatever we ought to do is right because it is His will, not is His will

because it is right. He is "the Beginning and the Ending." In this life of love only we "find rest for our souls," success for all their aspirations, an immeasurable calmness of felicity.

All the other theories of moral obligation have what truth there is in them as they are included in this. Is it that of utility? The will of God will effect what is most for our welfare; for He is "loving unto every man and His tender mercies are over all His works." Is it the "fitness," or "truth," or "order" of things? That is true and fit and the true order which He does and because He does it. Is it said that our duty arises from our "relations"? Whence came those relations? They are but a part of that will of God. To say that things are right because they *are* right is scarcely more than a mere juggle of words. This as well as Dr. H.'s equally unsatisfactory theory of man seeking his "end," are but blind gropings in the wrong direction after needless theories. We have only to turn toward the light and open our eyes to see that simple glorious truth given to us direct from Heaven, that to love God with all the heart, and for that love to do all His will, is the (not "chief" but) whole *end* of man.

In this light his two following arguments require no answer: that 1st. on this supposition "moral science is impossible," and 2d. that then, "God has no moral character." But this last expression is at once so irreverent and unmeaning that it may puzzle some minds as a mysterious argument to which they know not how to reply. "Moral character," as one

of the phrases of the artificial "moral science," has no meaning at all but as it describes how the Absolute Lord has made men to obey His will with knowledge of it and freedom of choice, and therefore a possibility of guilty disobedience. For any of them then to apply this same measure to Him, and set aside the glorious truth about Him, because, according to that, He would have "no moral character," is only so much the worse for their "moral science."

In the same mistaken way he quotes the rash speech of Abraham (followed soon by humble confession of his presumption), as "the appeal of *God* to *Abraham* : 'Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?'" Yet in no just sense is this contrary to the truth, that whatever is God's will is for that reason right. Finally he tells us of that divine truth : "This system has been strangely adopted under the impression that it honors God. *It renders it impossible that He should be honored.*" In this he seems to copy Sir James McIntosh. That judicious literary critic and elegant Whig orator was altogether out of his depth in giving judgment upon the vast matters of religion. Such an assertion by Dr. Hopkins requires more serious notice. That it is very rash and incorrect to say that "it renders it impossible, &c." is very plain from my own experience; which is that only by this thought of the Supreme will can my soul most glorify God. But the greatest refutation of it is in the mighty voice of Holy Writ, proclaiming with simple directness in Psalms,

Epistles and Gospels, that the Will of God is the sole and sufficient reason for all things.

It would be interesting and useful even now to pursue this criticism into the other theoretical discussions and practical rules of which the book is made up. But having shown the primary error which forbids the author's giving a true account of "the Law of Love," and its alliance with the other false notion of a "reign of law," we shall have space only for a few brief notices of some passages which further illustrate this.

For the first hundred pages more of "theoretical morals," we have a toil and struggle to make an analytical "science" of what is simple truth from God and duty for man. The very ingenuities of this are, as the psalm of burial says of old age, "but labor and sorrow." Thus the phrase of St. Paul, "a law unto themselves," is quoted to justify this mechanical notion of some "law" in morals apart from the simple will of God. The real meaning of this has been fully shown before (see App. C). Reference to that exposition will show that the words give no support whatever to the notion of a "reign of law" in morals. The poverty of even plausible references for this theory to Holy Writ, is also shown in repeated citations of the words of Abraham (Gen. xviii. 25), with the same misapprehension of them that has been already exposed.

P. 74. He inverts the truth about the word "law," assuming the misleading misuse of it in modern times

to be the primary and literal, and the other the figurative. Thus: "As *simple* law always has respect to force acting uniformly, so does obligation or *moral* law," &c., p. 86-87. Here we have this good man introducing with a deprecatory phrase ("If we may venture to speak of God in such a connection,") which does not at all excuse the presumption, some reasonings about what God must do as "acting morally," because a man ought to do certain things. It is the same blind and rash folly which we have noticed before, in allotting to Our Most High Lord what He may be and do because otherwise He would not have a "moral character."

The XII. Chapter, of "Conscience," begins with the universal assumption of our day of *conscience* as some distinct faculty that "sets up a tribunal," &c. But this whole matter is fully discussed in App. G, and to that I refer the reader.

Finally, when he proceeds to treat of "Love," as was inevitable this treatment is altogether artificial and erroneous. He seriously *analyzes* it by instances of merely incorrect uses of the word in no way connected with its real and primary meaning as we have it in the great law of man's life. What has the "love of food, books," &c. (see p. 99) to do with this? Even the account of these as "only desire" is incorrect; since in such uses "love" often means also and mainly *enjoyment*. Chap. II. Div. II—which treats of "Complacent Love," which "is *not* the love commanded by God," and "Righteous Indignation," is another instance of the artificial

distinctions and false reasonings into which his wrong theory misleads the writer. So also his laborious speculation as to "how love becomes law." How indeed? Because God gives it as the law. He made me to—and bade me—love. But this blind "science," having refused to see the central truth that all *law* is simply God's will, must grope after some other account of it.

The latter half of the book is occupied with "Love as a Law—Practical Morals." Its "preliminary statement," &c., of this, is of the same artificial and needless obscuring of a simple truth. The "practical morals" are much better treated. What is said is usually simple, intelligible and just. Yet how much better than any science is the simple teaching of duty by God's Church and Word. Even what is true in details is in the former set on a lower plane of action. The constant effort is to make the love of God only a *rule* of good, instead of that very good, *itself* "the fulfilling of the law."

[If by any chance what has just been said should fall under the eyes of the venerable and venerated author so strongly criticised, the present writer begs him to believe that he has said only what he thought needful for the truth which we both seek, and shall ere long see in its power away from the illusions of this life: that so far from being desirous, or even reckless, of saying something to wound his revered preceptor, he would at any time rather be among the many to contribute to his deserved honors.]

APPENDIX F.

REFLECTIONS UPON THE MISUSE AND MISCHIEF OF
ABSTRACT TERMS.

ANY one whose attention is called by whatsoever suggestion to the way in which the Holy Scriptures and other serious writings of former ages differ from those of our time in regard to the use of abstract words, will be more and more struck with the contrast as he continues the comparison. The whole course of enquiry in this book is an illustration of the fact. The metaphysical writers whom I have occasion to quote and to contrast with what the Word of God says about the same subjects, usually talk of "attributes," "principles," "laws," and all manner of abstractions, often indeed personifying them, while the other sort speak most of *persons*—of God Himself, and such of His creatures as He has made to know Him. This neglect of persons and supplying their place by personified abstractions is such a favorite and frequent device of one class of writers (as *e. g.* in the "Reign of Law") that their pages are so studded with capital letters as to suggest to one who casually opens such a book that it is historical or even geographical instead of philosophical. In any writings that touch upon religion we ought indeed often to find capital initials of such nouns or pronouns as represent the Sacred Name; but just these are missing where the others abound.

I neither attempt to traverse the old and extensive field of discussion as to the nature of abstract terms, nor enquire as to their value in some matters of thought. I only state what has specially come to my notice in this enquiry into "Natural Law"; that the excessive and all but exclusive use of them now in treating questions of duty and religion is different from that of Holy Scripture, and is misleading and irreligious in its tendency.

Indeed these suggestions are meant not so much for those versed in metaphysics as for the mass of intelligent readers who meet with such things in all that is now written for general reading, and who have a right to have this tendency and effect explained to them. I shall attempt this with a few instances of different kinds, in addition to what has been pointed out in the book about the misleading use of the terms "Law," "Mind," "Nature," &c.

It is well, however, first to trace what seems to be the general process of the mischief. To do this, we must at once discard the notion of Plato and all the mere philosophers, that the only cause of wrong opinions is ignorance, and that men only need to be shown what is true to prefer it to the false. We know by the Word of God and real universal experience, that with all mankind, self-conceit and selfishness, and a certain perverse dislike to some religious truth, interfere with the convincing force of what is true. Unless we wish to be deceived, we must always counteract these, or at least make some allowance for them.

Thus when, with the instinct of love of knowledge we are thinking about certain subjects, we rather avoid a truth which is painful and humiliating, and turn towards thoughts which please and flatter. In this case the mind may be ambitious to *know*, and yet not truth-loving enough to encounter the unpleasant truth. It will then avail itself of any artifices of language which seem to accomplish this. A most effective device of the kind, whether of indulgent self-deception, or of sophistry meant to mislead others, is by using "goodly words" which appear to convey truth while they suppress its force. Abstract terms used instead of the real personal words are most effective for this. They are capable of different shades of meaning. They make a fainter impression of reality, or an altogether false one. Perversions of Christian doctrine resort much to them, and themselves exist as "isms."

Another snare of men's intelligence is in their self-conceit. Pride of opinion makes them uncandid. Flattery betrays their judgment when nothing else can. No other flattery is so seductive as that which secures our own minds as its spokesman. Abstract notions are rather our own making, and, if not warned of the danger, and firm in self-denial, we are likely to prefer them to the thought of the real persons and things with which we have to do. They are the mist and twilight, while personal words are the broad, bright day. The advocate of false opinions finds the former most to his mind. He who best comprehends truth and duty, prefers the others; and we sometimes call this "common sense."

That very word "duty," in its right use, reminds us of another way in which abstract words are mischievous. (I say in its right use, for "duty," if given out by itself abstractly as some great law or law-giver or executive, becomes an instance of the mischief.) Men often want to get rid of their duty, or to influence other men to neglect theirs. Now duty is intensely personal. It has been most wisely stated and comprehended as "*my* duty towards *God*, and *my* duty towards *my neighbor*." But if for all those powerfully personal words we can substitute some of the other sort, as "Providence," "Omnipotence," "Law," "Mind";—"Humanity"—"Society," or even "Man," the force of duty is at once greatly weakened, and its claims retire into a remote distance.

There is a present illustration of this in that which after religion and morals (and it can never really be separated from them) is the greatest matter of thought for men; that is, politics under a free government. In questions about laws and their administration we hear much now of "capital" and "labor." All the dissertations about the distress of the poor and danger to the public peace from this, and all the speeches of those who have most to say in proposing changes of existing law, abound in these terms. The simple facts are that in every nation there are some men who are owners of property, and others who only live as they are employed by some of the former; that sometimes these wages are not enough to give a decent living to the laborers and their families, or at least that

some of them say so; that even at times some can say, "No man hath hired us," or they refuse to work at all, unless for higher wages, or because the employers insist upon lower, and even beside this prevent any who are willing to work for what is offered, from taking their places—even threaten to take the owners' property and divide it among themselves.

On the other hand the employing class are often so ostentatious and selfish in their expensive living, and so heartless about the sufferings of the poor, that they exasperate the anger of the other class and irritate their impatience and envy more than would be otherwise. And as the great fortunes are not usually the result of any merit, but of accidents of increased value (or even "heaped together" by overreaching and cruel hard dealing) of the present owners or their forefathers, a certain fierce sense of justice reinforces the rage with which men who have not food or clothes enough, regard the well-to-do. Thus, while the one set complain and threaten, the others denounce them as seeking to rob their betters, and so as enemies of peace and law. All this is said to be a "conflict between Labor and Capital."

Now there are no such persons as these. There are even no organized *societies* of persons, named "Labor" and "Capital" which are contending. And yet the actual dispute is of living persons according to their interests and feelings. It is one of the incidents of the controversy that in modern times, many owners of property join together in partner-

ships and stock companies which employ the laborers; and that the latter sometimes combine in "Trades Unions" and the like, so as to contend with effect against the power of wealth. On the other hand, too, there are now many more who own little tracts of land, and till them with their own labor, than was the case in earlier ages. Yet, after all, it is none the less a simple question about the rights and duties of men towards one another. The law of love forbids any to use the labor of another without a fair return, or to see him suffer in any way in order that we may enjoy ourselves. On the other hand, it forbids the poor to invade the sacred rights of property. It says, "Thou shalt not steal," and also, "Thou shalt not covet"—thus requiring us all to be patient and contented. Human laws which proceed from this duty, and are meant to carry it out, are useful to some extent. But without that divine law and its personal duty, they can do no good whatever: the selfish cunning or violence of men will evade or pervert all their provisions. If personal duty is enough regarded, there will be no need of the laws whatever.

But make of it all a "conflict of Labor and Capital," and all attention is turned from what you and I ought to do, to observing the fight between these huge genii, and to curiosity about its result. Some set to work to write pamphlets or newspaper articles. Preachers take sides with one or other of the combatants, or impartially and safely belabor them both. Legislators make speeches, appoint

committees and pass laws. This deceives everybody with a great appearance of wisdom and earnestness without reaching any man's sense of duty. Each one feels that he has done his part by making or hearing a discourse about "the relations of capital and labor," or helping to pass a law. It even dulls what feeling of duty to God and man there was before. Many a one who directly or through the officers of a stock company has been "grinding the faces of the poor," and had some uneasy sense that this was wicked, dismisses this feeling after hearing a profound discourse of the Rev. Dr. A. about "Labor and Capital"; and so some good workman who has been resisting the temptation to be furiously discontented and envious when he compared his anxious and narrow living with the purple and fine linen of a railroad president, gives up to the unhappy feeling after he has read the speech of the Hon. C. D., who informs him that he represents the angel Labor fighting against the demon Capital.

The same immoral self-deceit now penetrates all our politics by means of party spirit, and is such a wicked treachery to truth and justice, and such an affront to the Just One by whose name and authority our governments have any right to command obedience, that wise men may well fear what will soon come upon us as a people if it is not reformed. Allowing the most that can be said in favor of parties in a free nation, it is certain that truth and just dealing are the acts of individual men; that falsehood, treachery, false swearing and other violations of law in its

letter or intent are the sins of this and that *man* — are so known and judged by God and should be by their fellow-men.

But if evil-doers can lay such things off of themselves upon their "great party," if others who enjoy their party success by the same means can connive at it, and even their angry antagonists (from this evil fashion and a hope to succeed by like means in their turn) think only of abhorring and punishing the other "party," the moral sense of all is stupefied. Right and wrong, in this very solemn, and in a sense divine, matter of law, become empty words to represent the selfish struggles of two sets of men for place.

Thus might be seen the awful spectacle of men who lie, swear falsely, and greedily enjoy the pay and honor of high offices to which they have no right, getting to be the representatives and administrators of sacred law by means of outrages upon that law. And then the only criminal is supposed to be that impersonal thing, one of "the two great parties," while the actual guilty wretches are punished — by not only enjoying the stolen pay and power, but by all "good citizens" calling upon them to pay their "*respects*," — religious bodies and journals making obeisance to these representatives of the "*majesty* of the law," and great crowds gathering to salute them with acclamations! Finally, the little fraction of shame which evil-doers thus share with their "party" can be escaped at any time by a man's slipping away from his party under pretext of some

"new issue," and reappearing on the other side to "denounce" the very things he has abetted and profited by.

All these are great results of the use of language in such a way as to hide from men their real duties and responsibilities. They are even more noteworthy as indications of spiritual tendencies which affect our spiritual welfare yet more directly. For we ought to return at last to what is of more consequence than all else, the common use of abstract words to obscure our personal knowledge of God. That this is the powerful tendency of the prevailing fashion of writing about "Nature," "Mind," "Law," &c., has been sufficiently shown (see Chaps. I. and XVII. and App. F). I think I ought, however, to add this final expostulation with those religious writers who argue with much toil that God is *a* person and then sit down breathless and exhausted, yet as though they had achieved all that was needed. Whereas if they stop short with this they have not even proved that much. Nothing less than to see and make others see that He is *the* Person, can establish religious faith; and this can never be done along with the personifying of "Nature" and the fatal concession of a "Reign of Law."

APPENDIX G.

A MEDITATION UPON THE ETERNITY AND SELF-EXISTENCE OF GOD AND THE MODERN THEORY OF "CONSCIENCE."

I CANNOT remember when I did not hear and think of God. Some such things which I heard I now perceive were not wisely said to me, and my own thoughts of the Great One have not always, no, nor, as I suppose, really ever been entirely true. The more I do think and really know, the more certain this is to me. Thus I never began to have thought of Him or grew to have wiser thought by reasonings about my own consciousness or about "causation." So also I cannot imagine that the suggestion of Him as unseen, yet everywhere—that He is infinitely above me, yet I always in his presence,—that he was "before all worlds," and me as an insignificant part of this Creation "by the word of his power,"—I cannot imagine that this thought once entering my mind, could ever leave that mind as if it had never been there, or my thoughts about "the things that are seen," merely what they would be without that. Nor can I conceive that the first man's child (and so each successive generation following) could ever fail to have that thought of God in some guise or disguise, mentioned to it among the first things spoken to its opening soul, and thus have the world around it and all life different from what it would be without any thought of God.

For I see plainly by all my own experience, that it is in this sense that "the Heavens declare the glory of God," and that "the invisible things of Him from the (time of the) Creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." It is just in proportion as I already know of Him that I behold Him in all things. I *can*—I blush to confess it—see all these glorious things without a thought of "His handiwork"—that is if I am all intent upon what is worldly, even in the most innocent sense. And so in degree as I habitually, or from some special suggestion (of my reading, worship, or another's words) have just been thinking of Him, do I see Him in all other things visible or invisible. Much more then would man never have *discovered* religion, and still less the true religion merely by what he saw or thought.

But now giving myself up to true thoughts of God according to all this light of the true religion and knowledge of His works, I see—I feel more and more the immense distance between myself with all that I admire, and *Him*. The things of beauty or power, of sweetness or light, of truth or love, in which I exult most with consciousness, or that most attract me from without—all are far—so far below Him. The more I see of this greatest truth, the more profound becomes my humility. It also exposes my own perverseness, which must be odious to Him whose favor is more than mere life to me, and plunges me into deeper humiliation. All that is best

in me then revolts at the thought of false religion—that God is only like an all-powerful man, or that this Divine power is divided up among a number of such imperfect persons, or that there is no *person*, God,—that this word is only a word to represent all being, life and motion.

So my wisest thoughts all tell me that not only is He much more a person than I, of thought, will, and affection,—not only more than all this in man without his faults at his best,—but that His eternal *life* and *power* are something to which nothing we, nor any other of His creatures, nor all of His Creation together, can have any likeness. Yet He tells me in His Word and repeats in the very person of the God-man who has come to restore the blessedness of the first Creation, what He told us of that in the beginning, that He “created man in His own image.”

We might indeed pervert this wonderful truth and abuse this vast blessing of nature and knowledge, by arguing from it that God is altogether such as we are, and that we know what He does by reasoning of what men do. This is as much against my real reason, and against His Word, as for me to make unto myself a graven image of a man for my religion, and fall down and worship that.

But my soul, so little and weak, and in this comparison even more of such evil *will*, wearies and faints in all its reasonings. “Such knowledge is too wonderful for me: it is high: I cannot (by my own thoughts) attain unto it.” Then it finds rest and new strength in His own words to me about Himself.

And does He say that I am to understand His will, His works, His essential life, by studying His "image" in myself? No; not once have I any such suggestion from Him; I am even forbidden to do this as a presumptuous and self-deceiving folly. All that I thus learn of "His Eternal Power and Godhead," discloses a Person who is far above even our greatest words of expression. Among such I now array before my memory these :

"I Am that I Am." "He spake, and it was done." "For of Him, and through Him, and *to* Him, are all things, to whom be glory forever." "All things were created by Him, and *for* Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things *consist*." "The Blessed and *only* Potentate." "Upholding all things by the *word* of His power." "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for Thou hast created all things, and *for Thy pleasure* they are and were created." "I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End—the First and the Last." Then my soul rests in this most glorious and happy truth, that all things are good merely because they are His will: especially that He is *my* ultimate and all-including good, because He has made me to love Him with all my heart.

But if some fellow-man say to me that this is not enough for his obedience unless he can also believe that what is commanded is true, just and kind; or that if he had reason from "eternal principles" to believe this, it would be as good or better ground for his obedience than the mere will of God; then I ask

with surprise, what can be true, just or kind, except as it is God's will? How came you to have such thoughts except as He chose to make you what you are? Did some "Supreme Being" *before Him* establish "eternal principles" and then make Him subject to them? Or did He find Himself from all eternity surrounded by and subject to them? Then they rather than He are "the First and the Last." How are you wiser in this notion than those who will have it that God found Himself always in His eternity with eternal *matter* (and its laws) about Him, and so is not creator, but only "contriver" and "adjuster" of that which has as much self-existence as He? Nay, there is something nobler, greater, and *more real* than an "eternal principle," and that is *the Eternal Person*, of whose all-including will such principles are but instances.

Even now, following this supreme truth, if He show me His will in His Word that I shall believe in "eternal principles" upon which my duty rests, and not merely upon that blessed will, I will submit what seems my highest reason to that. But no. "The *commandments* (ponder that word)—the *will*, the *love* of God:" these are the simplest and the perfect expression of all my duty. If I may "go back" of that, then my questioning will be that which is sometimes related of a little child who has been told that God made all things: "And who made God?" I doubt if even the thoughtlessness of childhood ever asked this in simplicity. But even if so, it accepted with satisfied assent, this true answer:

"No one: God always was; it is enough for us to know that He made everything else." In the One Eternal Person and in Him alone we all alike find the ultimate fact and the ultimate reason of all. We say God's *Will*; but really His will in action is His Eternal Self, as His will for my obedience is Himself for me to love and enjoy "as long as I have any being."

THE MODERN THEORY OF "CONSCIENCE."—All truth known is God's word; all truth done is God's will. Among the deviations from this simplicity of true religion into which the self-confident reasonings of modern Christendom have long been straying, until these are taken for granted as a part of the Christian faith, is this notion of *conscience* as "a tribunal set up within each man"—"the voice of God in his soul," etc., etc. This deserves a very thorough discussion more complete than is possible here. Yet it will be very useful and hardly dispensable in the present work, to give what follows, holding myself in readiness at any suitable time to supply omissions, and state more fully much in which I have given results rather than researches.

In the first place let us consider that there is an ethical system of the Holy Gospels which is faultless and complete. This is, as Our Lord most plainly teaches, that God has made man to do His will in perfect love, and has informed him of that will from the first by His word: that in fact we are all averse to this truth and happiness; and that He came to

restore the truth perfectly, to restore us by pardon and a new birth to that perfect love.

When He describes His own life in this world, "without sin," He makes no mention of "conscience," but of "doing the will of God." When He describes goodness in other men, it is "whosoever shall do the will of God," and the like. When He tells how men *know* what they ought to do, it is "God's words," or "the commandments of God," not as of some "inward light" of a "conscience." He says, "I am the light of the world;" just as it was also declared of Him: "This is that Light which coming into the world enlighteneth every man." [And yet Christian scholars, seizing upon the mistaken rendering of our English Bible, have inverted this to prove their false notion of conscience.] "This is the condemnation, that light is *come into* the world, and men *loved darkness* rather than light, because their deeds were evil." True light then is not something within us as an essential part of each man's soul: it must come to us all from without — "from above."

So, on His way to the grave of Lazarus, He says expressly, that the man who tries to walk without this heavenly illumination, "stumbleth, because there is *no light in him*." And as before the Sun of Righteousness rose here the heavenly light of the first revelation to men still lingered as stars shine at midnight, so the glorious Gospel was not to be lost to us by His Death and Ascension; "but the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost, etc., He shall teach you all things," etc. Do not the zealous Christians

who make the notion of "conscience" in each man which is the "voice of God" to him, an important part of their religion, usurp for it what belongs to the Third Holy One?

It is only as plainly taught by the Word of God that I would venture thus to correct the mistake of so many learned and devout writers, and which indeed by their authority is so universally allowed, that this argument will at first find scarce any approval, and general astonishment if not censure. Yet some of the ablest advocates of this personal "conscience" unconsciously concede that it is not what Holy Writ teaches, as when Dean Mansel (*Lim. of Relig. Thought*, p. 202) speaks of Bishop Butler as he who has "most contributed to establish the supreme authority of Conscience in man." The writer of the article "Conscience" in *Blunt's Theol. Dict.* admits that the idea was unknown to the most intellectual people of the old world; and then assuming to find it in Holy Scripture, so miserably fails in such citations as to strengthen the proof of the opposite which I have already given. And now "Rev. Joseph Cook" with a great display of all sorts of "ologies" to convince applauding crowds that the unbelievers cannot use these wonderful things to triumph over him, with this makes the most extravagant assumptions about "conscience," and the most impassioned appeals to it, as if it were the corner-stone of Christian faith, instead of a metaphysical fiction "rather repugnant" thereto.

Before we proceed with a further examination of

the Holy Scriptures, let me make sure of not being misunderstood. Bishop Butler is greatly to be valued and revered for his incomparable Analogy and Sermons. That he erred in this theory of "Conscience" is a small matter compared with his great merit, especially in one who lived in that coldly and unspiritually intellectual age, which could not but influence all its writers, though he broke away so much from its stupors and illusions. It is just to him however to say that he did not carry the notion to the positiveness and elaboration which now prevails, and as its present champions impute it all to him. His masterly caution and far-seeing wisdom of argument are to be seen all through the three "Sermons upon Human Nature." He almost always speaks of "*reflection or conscience*," once even of it as only "*reflection*." This shows that it was still in his mind a question whether he was not (as he was) making of the use of our minds and wills upon moral truth, instead of other knowledge or choice, a separate faculty, or even another *person* within and beside our spirits. His followers and admirers have no doubts and make no such qualifications.

Nor do I for a moment deny that elsewhere than in the Gospels the English word "conscience" is found in our version of the New Testament. To that we will soon give especial attention, and see if it reveals the present notion and use of that word, though as has been shown, Our Lord said nothing of it in His personal ministry. Yet by this first inquiry we are much better fitted to enter upon the other.

We can best understand the precepts of our duty and the allusions to our relations to God with which the writings of the Apostles abound, by the great and simple truth of all things which their Lord and ours uttered as He went about doing good. It is far more probable that they will thus more fully illustrate and give details of the principles He has first revealed, than that only by them were those chief principles of our moral nature disclosed. What a low conception that would be of the Light of the world? What blindness and dumbness about the chief things in man's nature on the part of Him whom, not by inspiration of another, but of eternal and creative vision, "knew what was in man." We cannot escape from this conclusion by saying that He announced the absolute truth, but left it to His servants to state it in "a scientific" form. For we are assuming that to be primary truth of which He made *no* utterance.

We may now say briefly and in general of all the passages in the Gospels and Acts in which the English word *conscience* occurs, that it is of course of no authority at all except as it represents the word divinely inspired in the original language. The Greek word of the original is the same in each of these, *συνείδησις*. It is a well-known word of evident derivation, and which had had a fixed meaning in that language for five hundred years. Why then should we not translate it in that sense? That is the fair way, unless for some very good reason, as that it is without meaning in that use, or the like,

we must suppose that St. John and St. Luke meant something else. And this I suppose is just what our translators meant to do; for conscience in English (*conscientia* in Latin,) at first meant just that.

Thus *συνειδήσις* in classic Greek means simply self-knowledge, the perception of what passes or has passed in our own thoughts, whether it be about our opinion of some one else's character, our notice of some passing event, or our reflection upon some choice which we have now to make, or our recollection and judgment of something that we did once, or that some one else did. This is also just what *conscientia* meant in Latin, and *conscience* in French and English, and for which we have at a later period provided the term *consciousness* to replace the former word, now entirely appropriated by a new notion in regard to men's thoughts about their duty.

Evidently then, conscience first included all our notice and recollection of our thoughts, whether about matters of knowledge, of choice and action in things merely expedient, or of truth and duty to God and to man. As it included so much, we might render it in different cases by various equivalent expressions, as "self-knowledge," "inward thought," "self-judgment," "reflection," &c. (This last even Bishop Butler uses as equivalent, and to bring it outside of our prepossessions in the present use of terms according to prevailing notions, we will also try its sense in the three passages of St. John's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles by also substituting that, to see whether we must find a new mean-

ing for *συνείδησις*, because its force in usual Greek would convey no meaning, or an evidently false one. And here I would remark that nothing can be more unsafe (not to say uncandid) than in our understanding of the New Testament, to depart from the real meaning of Greek words in other writings, whenever that would give a sense contrary to our doctrinal prepossessions, and set up a "New Testament Greek" to accord with them. Who could not do this, and upon this sacred authority contend for any notions, instead of searching these Holy Scriptures for *what to believe?*)

The English of these three passages thus given is as follows: "And they, &c., being convicted by their own *self-knowledge* (or reflection)," &c. "I have lived in all good *self-knowledge* (reflection, observation and memory of my own conduct,) unto this day." "And herein do I exercise myself to have a good *self-knowledge* (reflection and recollection of my conduct) toward God and toward man." That is an entirely intelligible and natural statement, and is evidently what was meant to be said. It agrees with the simple truth of Our Lord's teaching as we have just studied. He addressed us as having intelligence and free will, and having been made to apply these above all, and including all (other things only existing to promote that end) to know and love Him and do His will, in which is contained the just and generous love of all our fellow-men. He nowhere tells us that beside the power of thinking and acting in virtue of which we are persons at all, we have

another knowing and choosing faculty applied to our *duties*, and which itself tells us these duties, rewards or punishes us as we behave, is a sort of other person of ourselves, and yet arbitrates among our other thoughts, ought to be first and always obeyed, is our very selves, and yet is even the Divine Person Himself speaking to us—all this which modern ethics tell us of, Our Lord Jesus Christ says nothing of in the Gospels, but speaks to men as if having simply a mind to know His truth as well as other knowledge, a heart to love God as well as other persons, a will to choose in these as well as in the inferior things of life. Thus the condemning self-knowledge of the wicked Pharisee, or the acquitting self-knowledge of St. Paul, proves nothing about the supposed “conscience” of the metaphysicians.

The same general observations apply to the use of the term *συνείδησις* (conscience) in the Epistles. In more than half of them we have but to substitute the primary meaning, as self-knowledge, “consciousness” or “reflection,” and we have a clear and the evidently true meaning of the writer. Of some others, which we will examine in detail, this may not at first be so clear. But some things are plain from the first: (1) that there is in the Epistles no such precise account of conscience in their sense, as some modern books contain, or of any such separate faculty of man under any other term. (2) There is no such precept as all these contain, that a man ought to “obey the dictates of his conscience.” They speak of us just as Our Lord does in the Gospels, as

able to know God and His commands, and that all duty and goodness is to love Him and do His will or "glorify" Him; not suggesting to us to look beyond this Divine will for some "eternal principle," or listen to any self-teaching of a "conscience," but "hear *the Word of God* and keep it."

But how then, some may say, are we to understand what St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Romans of those who are "a law unto themselves, etc.—their conscience also bearing witness, etc," and in the first Epistle to the Corinthians viii-x. about regarding other men's "consciences" in respect to idol worship? So far as the *word* in question is concerned, whoever will carefully construe it in all these passages by its simple and original meaning, will find the difficulty disappear. But on the other hand, if St. Paul did distinctly teach us of a separate part of man's spiritual nature which infallibly teaches every soul of our race its duty, and whose "dictates" ought to be instantly and implicitly obeyed by each one of us, that is a great matter of religion. At least it proves that either his "ethical teaching" was different from Our Lord's, or that we must add to the latter a fact and principle of which it was unconscious, and which seems to have with it no agreement. What adds to the seriousness of this question, is that the great Bishop Butler has chosen that sentence of St. Paul as the motto and even foundation proof of that argument for conscience in the present received sense which all others have followed. (Not that it was not a received notion long before his time, as I

may trace its rise in another place; but Butler is the great formulator and authority for it, the citation of whose words is supposed to close all arguments.)

If the passage of St. Paul does affirm the statement in question, it must do so in express and plain words, or at least by necessary inference. That is, it must not fairly admit of any other rendering which does not contain that statement, but rather accords with the opposite opinion. We have already seen that there is such another rendering which I make bold to say will bear any examination and only appear the more as what the writer meant. But if it were only of two such interpretations of equal merit, it would deserve the preference as according more with the whole tenor of the rest of God's book, and especially with the simple and perfect teaching of our duty by Our Lord in the Gospels.

Referring to Appendix B for the entire passage of the Epistle to the Romans preceding, we come to the very verses upon which the common notion of conscience has been anchored, as stated in the Book of God, especially notable as the text of Bishop Butler's second and third sermons on Human Nature: "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men," etc. (ii. 14-16).

The first thing to be observed, is that at least the chief reference is not at all to the present judgment of men, but to "the day of wrath and revelation" at the end of time. The second is that this is *not* said of all men, Jews and Gentiles alike, or even of all the latter, but only of such of them as "do the works of the law," or perhaps, *if* there be *any* such persons. If it be said that nevertheless if there be such a conscience in *any* man, it is a just inference that it is in *all* men, that is quite another thing. It certainly is not near as strong in proof of such a revelation as if it were said in so many words or their equivalent: "Every soul of man has a *conscience*, which is the voice of God within him telling him what is his duty on every occasion, and which it is his first duty to obey."

So Bishop Butler in his second sermon makes a serious mistake in saying: "Every man is naturally a law unto himself, that every man may find within himself the rule of right and obligation to follow it. *This* St. Paul affirms *in the words of the text*," &c. It does not occur to him that St. Paul affirms something else, and that it is for him to show, if he can, that the Apostle's words involve his proposition.

Bishop Butler also in this account of Human Nature fails to take notice of so important a fact as the Fall of man, by which none of the following generations are born as the first man was made. Not only is no true account of our moral nature possible without stating this wonderful duplicity of it, an original ideal and perfect nature, and an inher-

ited and actual degraded nature, but that true account would have led him to collate his text with the other parts of St. Paul's great argument, especially its conclusion that "all have sinned," &c. He might then even have preferred that other construction at which I have hinted, which makes the fourteenth verse read rather thus: "Even *if* the nations (heathen) which were without that written statement of the will of God which the Jews had in the law given by Moses, should of themselves perform what is written in that law, it would be no less that same will of God obeyed, His law known to them by the original tradition, and recalled to them by all of life around and within them, without a word of writing, and however indistinctly the thought of the One True God may have become."

But even if, in spite of all the terrible words of truth that have preceded, of how all heathen were "given over to a reprobate mind" (I. 28)—and all the universal conclusions in the III. chapter of this reasoning, as that "there is none righteous; no not one," &c., we allow that he asserts as a fact that some Gentiles "*do* the things contained in God's law," we must admit that we have not yet that statement of "conscience" upon which all Christian ethicists now insist. To ascertain whether it is fairly involved in these words, and learn all that God teaches us by them, let us sound them anew and carefully. Let us notice first that "the law" as spoken of here, is not precisely the whole duty of man, but a *certain statement* in words given to the Israelites.

Now if some other great communities of men, *τα εθνη*, the nations, (it is not *said* of individual "Gentiles,") do by nature *the things contained* in the law (some of the duties which are mentioned in the law of Moses), these not having *the law*, (that written statement of God's will) are a law unto themselves." Their own thoughts furnish them with that law or statement of God's will which the Jews had in a written Word. So far we are all agreed.

But let us look farther and see what certainly is *not* included in this. First, it does not teach that each soul can make its own duty. That is decided by God's will and not man's. Then this is not said of individuals:* "they (the nations) having not *the law* (of the sacred nation) are *a law* unto themselves; their laws, institutions and religions, false, imperfect, immoral even as they have become in that dreadful descent from original knowledge of God which is described in the first chapter, these still contain enough of the primeval truth to convict them of sin in the Judgment Day. And as the following verse says, with these go the thoughts of each soul; its idea of Divine power and of obedience to that in right doing; thoughts which have come down from the days when the Lord God talked with the first man, and to which all man's nature and destiny so

*It is true that a secondary sense of this word was common among the Greek-speaking Jews, so that they sometimes spoke of individuals of "the nations" by that term, or "Gentiles" as the A. V. then renders it. But a practical scrutiny of the use of the word in the N. T. will convince any candid person that it does not need such a departure from the ordinary meaning once in ten times. A genuine search after the divine meaning here cannot afford to leave this matter unnoticed, and so learn something from the fact that St. Paul speaks here not of *Graikos* or *ethnikoi*, but of "*τα εθνη*."

respond and correspond that they can never die out among men, as the youngest child hears them uttered around it, and takes them at once into all its thoughts.

How then does this "law unto themselves," this statement of God's will and their duty, come to those who have not a verbal statement of it, such as that favored people had to whom were committed the written "oracles of God"? Now certainly if we are told anywhere else in God's Word that He had made man with a special faculty called "conscience," or any other name you please, which invariably and perfectly tells each one of our race his duty; whose "dictates" he is bound to hear and obey, by which means he will always do right, then we should probably refer this "law unto ourselves" to that faculty. But no one claims to cite any such passage. On the contrary, those who affirm such a faculty, if called upon for proof of it from Holy Writ, repair only as Bishop Butler does, to these very words of St. Paul which we are now studying.

Do they say it? "Yes," says some one; "for they certainly mean something, and what else can it be?" That is a very questionable way of finding the meaning of God's Word. Can we have any reverence or confidence in it unless we think of it as shining with its own light and not meaning something merely because no one suggests any other? But we are in no such quandary. I have already alluded to, and will now more fully state, an account of this law of the Gentiles unto themselves, which,

unlike the popular theory of "conscience," is entirely in accord with the rest of God's Word, with all this very argument of St. Paul, with our best reason so far as we can apply it to such matters, and, above all, with the personal teaching of Our Lord and Saviour about the whole duty of man:

The very purpose of man's existence being to love God with all his soul, that purpose taken up by human will becomes the greatest of sentiments, and finds its ambition and action in doing all His will. That will was made known to the first of our race in direct words; and all the *nature* of man, *i. e.* his constitution as God made him, responded to this with assent and with constantly *reminding* him of it, just as the knowledge of the "eternal power and Godhead," given at the same time, was testified to and recalled in each man's thoughts by the sight of "the things that were made" (i. 20, &c.). Thus, though the whole race fell from the first innocence and piety, while one small nation had a "law" given to it of true religion and true duty, the others not thus favored were not by this relieved from that great judgment of God upon all, either in his present government or in that last day of time when "before Him shall be gathered all *nations*" (*παντα τα εθνη*).

The tradition and memory of even this piety and virtue, if they will pause in passion and selfishness to give any thought to them, are a declaration (that is, *law*) to them of their duty, by which they shall be judged—commended if they obey, condemned if they disobey. But alas, the latter is the universal fact

with them all as well as with Jews judged by "*the law*"; so that if any of either class are not ruined forever, it will not be from man's merit, but from God's mere mercy.

The phrase "*do by nature*" is just as intelligible, and more so, in this interpretation as in the other. Nature (*φύσις*) is evidently here used in the general method of the New Testament to denote the constitution of creatures as God has made them — what they are by birth, or that which is their usual way of action or existence. Man, as we have before noticed, is that anomalous creature who has now in fact a nature contrary to his original nature. He is now born, not as he was first made, in the Divine image of purity and love, but perverse and ungodly, unless by the great miracle of new creation in Christ Jesus. Our Lord he is born again to pardon and holiness. Yet in the midst of that ruin of his fall there remains always some knowledge of Divine things and some sense of the excellence of virtue. This is what St. Paul recognized when he said to all the Athenians who gathered to hear him, Epicureans as well as Stoics or Platonists, orthodox pagans as well as speculating philosophers: "Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, *Him* declare I unto you."

So when any one of these acts according to this knowledge in its most imperfect form, he is said to do this "*by nature*." And so when the people more favored than others in having also a written law of God looks down upon the other nations, it is reminded that all men alike are guilty before God;

these Israelites as convicted by that very Holy Scripture of which they boast, the others by those unwritten traditions and memories which, even with all allowance for the decays and corruptions of ages, they so fearfully violate.

The following words complete this sense and make it more clear: "Which show the work of the law (the same effect as of a written law) written (not the law, but the effect; for it is *γραπτον*, not *γραπτου*) in their hearts (their memories and thoughts), their *consciousness* (self-judgment) also bearing witness, and their thoughts among themselves accusing or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men," &c. I would also call the attention of careful students to the singular number of "conscience," whether or not as compared with the plural of "thoughts," and ask them whether this is not of itself almost decisive as to the correctness of my rendering.

Why is not what has now been given the true and natural meaning of the whole passage? It is accordant with the fact of an original and universal pure religion. It is perfectly in subjection to that perfect doctrine of man's duty which our Lord Himself taught in Palestine. Why then interpret St. Paul otherwise in order that he may introduce into Christian belief another notion of a Divine voice set in each man's soul by original creation, to obey the "dictates" of which is his first and perfect duty? Does it not seem strange to those who believe this that we have nowhere in the Word of God that

precept with which all our modern ethics abound : "Thou shalt obey the dictates of thy conscience"? Will any one meet this question as all the challenges of the silence of Holy Scripture about "natural law," &c., are met, by saying that the Bible was not meant to teach good morals? Compare this with the thousand voices of the Holy Book which most fully and yet simply command us to obey the voice, the will of *God*.

If I have shown that the usual notion of conscience is not found here, this virtually carries with it all the other passages in the Epistles where the term appears. Any one can substitute consciousness, self-knowledge, or some of the other real meanings of *συνείδησις* in any such sentence, and find the real sense of the writer. Even in the few cases where our prepossessions would still obscure this true sense, did time allow, I could now remove the difficulty. But I would particularly notice that part of St. Paul's I. Epistle to the Corinthians (viii.-x.) in which he discusses the matter of eating meat which has been sacrificed in a heathen temple. In this the term in question occurs eight times, and among these in such phrases as "weak conscience" and "conscience' sake." In substance the wiser Christian is advised to forego something which he has a right to do, not in "obeying the dictates of his own conscience," but on account of the other man's. This has no meaning as of one's own conscience being for each man the voice of God in his soul and the certain law of his duty ; but is plain enough of

one's self-judgment, which may be more or less erroneous.

The discrepancy of this notion with all other truth about man's nature as Our Lord in His personal teaching recognized it, and as it is quite clearly and simply implied in the other Scriptures, is a decisive objection. With this agrees our wisest consciousness, that we are compounded of "body, soul and spirit"—the material, the living, and the spiritual. With this last part man can know truth of various kinds, and exercise will and love upon various objects. But knowledge and choice about God and about duty are the highest spiritual actions, are those for which indeed the others exist. To call this *use* of our intelligence, another part or faculty of our nature, and fasten upon it the term "conscience," is no wiser than it would be to call the knowledge of pains and dangers our "*inscience*," and that of bodily pleasures and desires our "*abscience*," and divide the soul up into that many parts. Indeed we have no right to stop there. Let us suppose as many "faculties" as there are things that a man may know or choose. The prevailing notion of conscience is thus plainly a gratuitous violation of that just principle which Sir William Hamilton calls "the law of parcimony."

Then also this notion obscures, if it does not directly contradict, the truth that God the Holy Ghost does affect the souls of men directly, both enlightening them with truth and inclining or moving them to do right. If the imagined "conscience" is

such a divine voice and influence in all men alike, and a part of their natural constitution, what need and what place for being moved by the Holy Ghost? We might even ask what use of any *Word* of God, and put the question which St. Paul supposes of his opposer, "What advantage then has the Jew" (or the Christian either) without being able to make his triumphant answer, "Much every way."

Thus, Bishop Butler, though beyond all doubt a sound and firm believer in the Fall of Man, and in God the Holy Ghost, seems forced by his philosophical theory to be silent about both in treating (even in *sermons*) of the moral goodness of men. I find a great contrast to this when this same St. Paul treats of the same matters in the I. Ep. to the Corinthians (chap. ii.) and says that "man's wisdom," his best thoughts according to his actual constitution—what God first made him modified by the Fall, is incompetent to discover "the things of God." We have a power of knowing or apprehending them, but only as *He reveals* them. "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of a man which is in him: even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God. Now, we *have received*, not the *spirit of the world*, i. e. our mere constitution—*χρῆμα*, without words from God, but the spirit which is of God, that we *might* know the things which are freely given us of God."

In this, as I apprehend, the greatest distinction is drawn between any such notions about Divine things and duties as we may elaborate by our intellectual

processes, and real knowledge of them *given* us in *words* by God Himself. The former are illusive and untrustworthy: the latter are *truth*. This indicates that human speech is necessary to true religion, and was *given* to us chiefly for that purpose; is neither one of the inventions of ages of human development, nor later than and only accidentally connected with the knowledge of God. Even our physical research seems to me to have disclosed this in the fact, if it be one, lately announced, that persons born deaf and dumb have no idea of God until they are taught some sort of language.

Finally, the very discrepancies and extravagances of those who describe this imaginary conscience suggest error. As an instance of this, take the article "Conscience" in Blunt's Theolog. Dict., and besides almost everything which the Word of God assumes of the whole spirit of man, we are assured that "it is the absolute rule of right;" "it is the utterance of God's voice in the soul." How does that agree with the Hindoo's conscience as he obeys it by drowning his old father in the Ganges, or with Plato's when he, with all his elevated thoughts (hardly if at all short of inspiration according to some of his Christian admirers,) sees no wrong in unnatural crimes? How can there then be a "perverted conscience," as facts force these theorists to allow? More than all, what can some expressions mean which they quote from Holy Scriptures as mentions of this: an "evil conscience," a "defiled conscience" and the like? All is plain enough of a

conscience which is simply a man's consciousness or reflection upon his own thoughts. But what of an absolute rule of right, or, yet more, an "utterance of God's voice," which is "evil" or "defiled"? .

But the chief, the decisive disproof of this notion is in what I have already adverted to, that the greatest teacher of morals who ever walked the earth, who, in an incomparable sense "knew what was in man," never told those who heard Him of their "consciences," and that they should obey their "dictates." He simply spoke to them of doing the will and obeying the commandments of God. He addressed men as simple spiritual persons who had the power of knowing and loving, which they ought to apply first and chiefly to God, and next to their fellow-men in duty. He never supposes or suggests to them the getting knowledge about this from within themselves, but from without and from above. He makes this comparison: "The eye is the lamp of the body." In what way? Simply as an inlet for the light shining outside. He says still more expressly: "If any man walk *in the day* he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world." The glorious rays of the sun without him enter within. "But if a man walk in the night," if there be no heavenly knowledge to *come* to him, "he stumbleth, because there is *no light in him*."

I conclude then that the notion of a "natural religion" which men get otherwise than by words from God, and that of "conscience" as commonly understood, are not found or recognized in Holy

Scripture, but are really contrary to it; that they began with some human speculations, were attached to some verbal resemblances in Scripture and prevailing among philosophic Christians, have been argued from such texts as these by certain great writers who evidently did not first study the words of Scripture to find *their* meaning, but taking the philosophic theories for granted and to be the best antidote to infidel bad morals, assumed that they must be contained in those words of St. Paul, as they certainly are nowhere else in "God's Word written." Our duty then is with them and other such errors, according to certain other words which that holy Apostle was inspired of God to write, to "cast down reasonings and every high thing that exalteth itself against the *knowledge of God*, and bring into captivity every thought (even the most ambitious speculations of the greatest men) to the *obedience of Christ*."





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